

Nicos Poulantzas *State, Power, Socialism*

State, Power, Socialism



NICOS POULANTZAS

With an introduction
by STUART HALL

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Introduction to the Verso Classics edition

Nicos Poulantzas: State, Power Socialism

Stuart Hall

The unexpected and tragic death of Nicos Poulantzas, in Paris, in October of this year has robbed Marxist theory and the socialist movement of one of its most distinguished comrades. Though only 43 at his death, he had already established for himself a just reputation as a theoretician of exceptional and original stature. He was also, to those privileged to know him, a person who commanded respect and affection, above all for the depth of his commitment to practical and theoretical struggle. Born in Greece, he was active in the Greek student movement in the 1950's, when he joined the Greek Democratic Alliance (EDA) abroad, legal form of the then proscribed Communist Party. After his law studies, he came to France, and at that time joined the Greek Communist Party. In 1968, after the internal split, in the wake of the Colonel's coup, he joined, and remained, a member of the Greek Communist Party of the Interior. In an interview which Alan Hunt and I conducted with him shortly before his death, he told us that it was virtually impossible in the early days even to acquire the classical texts of Marx and Engels, and he came to Marxism largely through French philosophy, especially Sartre.¹ His doctoral thesis in the philosophy of law attempted to develop a conception of Law drawing on Goldmann and Lukács. It was published in 1964: but he was already beginning to feel the limitations of this orientation within Marxism.

He encountered and read Gramsci seriously for the first time then. An early article published in *Les Temps Modernes* attracted the attention of Althusser, and he then became one of that remarkable company of young Marxists – including Balibar, Macherey, Rancière, Debray – which constituted the core of the ‘Althusser’ group.

Between 1968 and 1979, in a series of major interventions which established his international reputation as a Marxist scholar, Poulantzas set his distinctive mark on some of the most advanced and intractable debates within Marxist theory: particularly those concerning social classes, the State and the analysis of ‘the political’. Through the range of his treatment of these themes, and the analytic rigour of his thinking, he imposed himself, not only on debates within Marxism and between Marxists, but also on the more recalcitrant territory of ‘conventional’ political science. The ‘Miliband/Poulantzas’ debate, first initiated in these pages, has become an obligatory reference-point for all subsequent theorizing on the modern capitalist State. Poulantzas made this topic – at once of the utmost political and theoretical resonance – his own. It is appropriate, then, that the most recent of his books to be translated into English is one which returns, centrally, to this topic; also, that it should be a book as striking for its opening up of new questions as it is for securing and developing well-established positions.

Deciphering the State

This is not the appropriate time or place for a comprehensive assessment of his work. But it is necessary, briefly, to set *State, Power, Socialism* in the context of that earlier work, partly to identify its distinctiveness, partly to situate the evolution and ‘turns’ in his thinking which the new book represents. *Political Power and Social Classes* was his most studiously ‘Althusserean’ text: *Reading Capital* is footnoted on the very first page of the Introduction. This book situated itself firmly within the Althusserean schema, as a ‘regional’

study of the political instance. In its opening chapter, it worked through a discussion of classes and the State within the strict framework of Althusser's theory of 'instances' and of structuralist causality. It attempted to substantiate the definition of classes as the complex and over-determined 'effects of the unity of the levels of the structure' (p. 75). At the same time, it attempted to give a primacy, within this framework, to the constitutive effect of 'the class struggle'. This was already a sort of correction for the hyper-structuralism of *Reading Capital* and the integral functionalism of some aspects of 'Ideological State Apparatuses', (where the 'class struggle', though constantly invoked, is not integrated into the structure of the argument, and thus remains largely 'gestural'). Many would argue that this set up a tension in Poulantzas's work, between 'structure' and 'practice', which was not resolved there, and which continued to haunt his later work. In *Political Power and Social Classes* there is a double-framework to every question – each element appearing *twice*, once as the 'effect of the structure', once as the 'effect of a practice'. This tension may, in part, account for another aspect of that work – its tendency towards a *formalism* of exposition – from which his work as a whole cannot be exempted. This tendency is also present in his later book, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism* which starts from a very different point – the imperialist chain – but then attempts to work formally through from that global level to its intersecting effects on the dominant classes of particular social formations. The problem of 'formalism' recurs in the more explicitly political book, *Crisis of the Dictatorships*, which is an application of the same schema to the particular conjunctural crises in Greece, Spain and Portugal which resulted in the overthrow of the dictatorships. Here, too, what is gained in clarity – for example, in explaining the fractioning of the Portuguese bourgeoisie from the level of the global 'crisis of valorization' – is lost when one approaches the more conjectural elements which played a decisive effect both in the generation of the 'crisis of the dictatorships' and in the limited nature of the 'settlements' which replaced them.

Despite these weaknesses, both *Political Power and Social Classes* and *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism* were, in their different ways, major theoretical interventions. *Political Power and Social Classes* was especially innovatory. It is interesting that ‘the State’ does not appear in its title, since it is now – rightly – thought of as making its most significant contribution in this area. The substantive sections on ‘Fundamental Characteristics’ and ‘Relative Autonomy’ of the State are the chapters most frequently referred to. Already, Poulantzas marked himself off from both an ‘instrumentalist’ and a ‘technico-economic’ conception of the State. He took his stand on a particular reading of what he called, ambiguously, ‘the Marxist scientific problematic’ (p. 127). In a series of challenging exegeses, he developed a conception of the capitalist state grounded in Marx, Engels, Lenin and Gramsci. In his arguments concerning the separation of the ‘economic’ and the ‘political’, the role of the State in organizing the power bloc and disorganizing the dominated classes, and in displacing the class struggle through the construction of a ‘general interest’ and the isolation-effect (the constitution of the legal-individual citizen), Poulantzas clearly attempted to give Gramsci’s concept of ‘hegemony’ a more theoreticized and systematic formulation – though his manifest debt to Gramsci (handsomely acknowledged elsewhere) always awakens in him an extended ambiguity: Gramsci is nowhere praised without being, also, criticized. This signals a problem, concerning Poulantzas’s search for consistency and ‘orthodoxy’, and his retrospective construction of an impeccable Marxist lineage which reappears, in a different form, in the new book, and on which we comment more extensively below. ‘Exceptional’ forms of the state then provided the basis for the volume on *Fascism and Dictatorship*, with its more detailed historical cases, and its delineation of the distinctions between ‘fascism’, ‘Caesarism’ and ‘Bonapartism’.

Both *Political Power and Social Classes* and *Fascism and Dictatorship* were criticized at the time for their tendency to ‘overpoliticize’ the State. Poulantzas sternly resisted this criticism at the time; though, since then (and again in the book under review) he half-acknowledges its force. Whether or not he took the point, it is the

case that his other major theoretical work, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism* adopted a more decisively 'economic' framework. It begins with the 'imperialist chain'. Though its middle sections did deal with the 'State and the Bourgeoisie', it was within the framework of the inter-relationships he traced between contradictions at the 'global' and the 'nation-state' levels. The book is, perhaps, better known for its contribution to quite another – though related – issue: the vexed question of the delineation of class fractions within Marxist theory. Poulantzas's theses on the 'new' and the 'old' petty-bourgeoisie, and on productive and unproductive labour, have since provided a seminal point of reference for a continuing debate (to which Braverman, Carchedi, Gorz, Erik Olin Wright, Hunt and others have also contributed). The complexities of these arguments need not detain us further.

What is significant is the way in which these highly theoretical and often abstract debates progressively become politicized. If one looks, for example, at the way Poulantzas returns to the discussion of the 'new petty-bourgeoisie' three or four years later – in his contribution to *Class and Class Structure*² – it is clear that the problem of 'specifying the boundary of the working class' is 'not simply a theoretical question; it involves a political question of the greatest general importance concerning the role of the working class and of alliances in the transition to socialism' (p. 113). This theme gives this latter piece a clarity of formulation and a thrust sometimes missing from his earlier work. From this point forwards, he begins to work on the theory/practice nexus in a more direct and pertinent way. In part, this marks his response to conjunctural developments – the break-up of the old dictatorships, the Chilean experience, the emergence of 'Eurocommunist' currents in Europe, his closer involvement with the opening and the dilemmas of a 'Common Programme' in France, the contradictory evolution of the Italian Communist Party's 'historic compromise'. Significantly, these also engage, in different ways, others of the original Althusser 'group' – Althusser himself, Balibar, Rancière, Debray. But in Poulantzas's case (perhaps also in others) it must also be regarded as symptomatic of a deeper 'turn' in his work. The crisis of the

capitalist state becomes more pressing; simultaneously, openings to the left appear as real historical alternatives; there is, however, the shadow of Stalinism and the Gulag. Socialism returns to the agenda: correspondingly, so does the ‘crisis of socialism’/‘Crisis of Marxism’. The critical interview with Poulantzas by Henri Weber, which deals with the State and democracy in the context of ‘the transition to socialism’, indicates a shift of perspective, a new agenda and strikes a new note of political urgency.³ There is also a clear dissolution of some of the certainties which underpinned the ‘orthodoxy’ of his previous work. This ‘openness’ to new themes is sustained in the interview in *Marxism Today* referred to above. The capitalist state is defined, not only in terms of contradictions but of ‘crisis’. But some of the fixed reference-points of his previous discourse – e.g. Leninism, the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ – are put in question. The fulcrum of his theoretical universe shifts. *State, Power, Socialism* is now – alas – the most complete/uncompleted statement from this changing position we are likely to see. This constitutes the importance, the resonance – also, the poignancy – of the book, in the light of his untimely death.

Foucault and the Materiality of Power

‘Openness’ and ‘orthodoxy’ are terms which require a little more elucidation. The first is a value which – in the context of the sectarian climate which disfigures Marxist intellectual culture in Britain – is hard to over-rate. But, if one takes theoretical issues seriously, as Poulantzas always did, it is not a self-evident or self-validating ‘good’. At a time when anything and everything claims the fashionable mantle of ‘materialism’, a touch of orthodoxy remarkably concentrates the mind. These are not minor matters: they bear directly on the formation and deformation of a Marxist culture and the politics of intellectual work. The different kinds of ‘openness’ which *State, Power, Socialism* evidences are not difficult to specify, at a simple level. He takes on and engages with a whole

series of new positions and arguments – of which Foucault's contradictory appearance in the text is only the most significant example. Some of these new concepts begin to inflect his own discourse. He is open to reformulations of his earlier positions. He is 'open' on some of the central issues in 'the transition to socialism'. The effect of giving way to these profound uncertainties about questions which the 'older' Poulantzas would have regarded as settled, must have been in itself, a profoundly unsettling experience, personally and intellectually. In sum, this leads, in *State, Power, Socialism*, on the one hand, to the opening up of a rich, new seam of concepts and ideas, not subject to his normal tendency to orthodox closure; on the other hand, it leads to certain fluctuations of tone and address, to a continuous discursive movement of advance and retreat, which gives the marked impression of – tragically – unfinished business.

The Introduction to *State, Power, Socialism* offers, in three brief sections, a resumé of the major themes to be examined. The first of these sections advances the argument that there can be 'no general theory of the State to be found in the Marxist classics' (p. 20). Paradoxically, given his previous tendency to invoke a consistent 'classical' tradition, the propounding of what is described as 'the Marxist-Leninist theory of the State' is now declared a 'stupendous dogmatism'. His distance from the 'economism and structuralism' implicit in Balibar's contribution to *Reading Capital*, first signalled in a highly significant footnote to the opening page of *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, is now extended to include the 'formalist-economistic position'; also the 'topographical representation of "base" and "superstructure"', and 'the social totality ... conceived in the form of instances or levels'; later still, to Balibar's sterling defence of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. Characteristically, this loosening of the bonds of 'classical' Althusserianism, and the retrospective question-mark it must place over Poulantzas's earlier orthodoxies, are not fully confronted or their theoretical effects reckoned with. Poulantzas's reticence, here is part of that fluctuation of address commented on above. Here, too, another 'enemy' is engaged: the 'New Philosophers', whose active presence

on the French intellectual scene and threatened expropriation of Foucault haunts this text throughout (and they are not the only eloquent ghosts in the machine). The thesis is advanced (it is, surely, Poulantzas's latest attempt to deal with the problem of the relation of the 'economic' and the 'political' in his theory of the State) that, though the State is the site of the political condensation of struggle, it is not external to the relations of production, but penetrates them and, indeed, is constitutive for them. The second section challenges the notion that the State can be adequately conceptualized as 'coercion plus consent'. Here, Foucault's work makes the first of many pertinent and contradictory appearances. He is 'present', both at a challenging theory to be criticized, *but also* as a major new influence within Poulantzas's own discourse: now, Poulantzas speaks, in his own voice, of 'bourgeois discourses', of 'discipline', the 'bodily order' and 'techniques of knowledge'. Again, the theoretical effect of these 'loans' is not directly confronted. The third section deals with the concept of 'power', on which Poulantzas has written before. Here, almost exclusively, his preoccupation is with the 'abstract diagram of power' in Foucault, and the latter's tendency to dilute and disperse power amongst a 'pluralism of micropowers', which Poulantzas rightly sees as providing a cover for the 'New Philosophers' in their vivid oscillation from a 1968-style 'libertarianism of the left, to a 1979-style, anti-the-Gulag-state 'libertarianism of the right'. Power as deriving from objective positions, rooted in the division of labour, is advanced as more adequate than Foucault's thesis of the dispersal of power, everywhere.

The main body of the text is then divided into three Chapters, dealing with the processes of the capitalist state, the state and political struggles, the state and the economy. Each advances a challenging thesis. The first insists on the 'institutional materiality' of the state as a complex of apparatuses. The second develops the proposition that, in relation to political struggles, the State must be conceived as a 'condensation of the relations of [class] forces'. This theme, already present in Poulantzas's work in a more muted form, here displaces his earlier conception of the State as the 'cement' of a

social formation. The third reviews the economic functions of the State, in the context of the argument that the state does not only reproduce the 'general external conditions of production' (a phrase culled from Engels's *Anti-Dühring*) but enters into the constitution of the relations of production. Each of these, in a different way, represents a shift, either of emphasis or of tendency, from his earlier work.

The most instructive, in many ways, is the chapter on 'institutional materiality': The interest, here, residing not only in the intrinsic novelty of the proposition (which requires fuller exploration), but in the way Poulantzas's arguments are constantly inflected, and frequently deflected and interrupted, by the running debate with Foucault. 'Institutional materiality' is more than a filling-out of Althusser's earlier emphasis on *apparatuses*. The material processes of state action have here been transformed by Foucault's concepts. Thus the way the state articulates the intellectual/manual division of labour is developed through Foucault's emphasis on the coupling of 'knowledge' and 'power'. We hear, now, of its 'practical supremacy of knowledge and discourse'. At the same time, Foucault's abstract diagram of 'power' is criticized for its failure to recognize the crystallization of knowledge and power in the State's 'organizational framework'.

There are many arresting propositions and generative ideas in these pages. Nevertheless, the way they are handled and developed is not, ultimately, satisfactory. And here, theoretical fluctuations are most marked. Key terms, concepts and formulations have been 'loaned' from Foucault. They add new dimensions to Poulantzas's thinking. However, their overall theoretical effect, in modifying not just the surface discourse but the problematic in which Poulantzas has been working, is nowhere adequately confronted. This is related to the fact that Foucault is not, after all, simply stringing together a set of new ideas. He is developing a different problematic – one, moreover, which is, at several key points, theoretically inconsistent with Poulantzas's framework of 'classical Marxism'. Foucault is not simply pointing, in particular instances, to the proliferation of discourses. He is advancing a theory of their *necessary heterogeneity*.

Similarly, Foucault's 'abstract diagram of power', present everywhere in the positive face of power, and in the microstructures of all types of social relations, is explicitly counterposed to the concept of power radiating from a complex centre. The capitalist state is largely missing from this schema, not by inadvertence but by design. Thus it is not possible, theoretically, for Poulantzas to take these concepts on, only 'correcting' them by reintegrating them into a more conventional conception of the state, state power and class relations. This has the effect, in Poulantzas's discourse of returning to a set of more-inclusive 'truths' which are simply asserted. Foucault is then awarded marks for his insights, but ticked off and put in his place by a process of Marxist rectification. I am not advancing a dogmatic argument for the absolute incompatibility of theoretical paradigms: but it is to warn against a procedure of selective conflation. In part, this arises because, though Foucault's traces are everywhere, there is no integrated exposition-and-critique of his position – such, for example, as we find in Peter Dews's recent, lucid article on '*Nouvelle Philosophie* and Foucault'.⁴ It is true that part of Poulantzas's project appears to be to rescue the valid insights in Foucault's work from their mis-appropriation into the camp of the 'New Philosophers'. But the prior question must be whether – the real differences of political outlook notwithstanding – there isn't, after all, a consistent convergence here, which has to be unearthed at the level of its problematic, before particular concepts can be borrowed and transformed. Foucault *does* see knowledge-power (*savoir/pouvoir*) as implied in the very fact of institutionalization. Every regulation is an exclusion, and every exclusion is an operation of power. No distinction is drawn, as Dews shows, between 'a politically enforced silence and a silence of absence which is merely the reverse side of the positivity of a given cultural formation' (p. 148). Power, for him, is an 'abstract machine', whose action is everywhere, and which is assumed prior to its concretization in any particular field (*State, Power, Socialism*, p. 68). Since power is everywhere, resistance *is*, ultimately, a concept without a home: there is no theoretical reason why it should appear, no accounting for its appearances, and nothing to

check its assignment as just another aspect of the 'positivity' of power – 'coextensive and contemporary' with it. It is acknowledged that, side-stepping the question of the relationship between the shift in the modality of 'discipline' which he traces in *Discipline And Punish* and other relations which occur at the same time, often leads Foucault into an abrupt descent into a 'vulgar' economism on the side. But this is no mere forgetfulness. It is because Foucault remains explicitly agnostic about such convergences in order to retain his thesis of the necessary heterogeneity of instances. His 'power' is dispersed precisely so that it cannot, theoretically, be traced back to any single organizing instance, such as 'the State'. It voids the question of the economic precisely because it cannot, in his view, be crystallized into any set of global relations – e.g. class relations. Foucault's implicit 'anarcho-libertarianism', with its characteristic oscillations – power/the body; power/resistance – is not, as Poulantzas's sometimes claims, merely the effect of his 'second-order epistemological discourse' (p. 68). This does not mean that his ideas cannot be transposed into a different framework. But it does mean that Poulantzas's attempts at a synthesis are accomplished too fast, leaving certain glaring inconsistencies.

Another consequence of dealing with Foucault, so to speak, on the run, is that Poulantzas does not allow himself the space to develop his own, new and positive insights. For example, the state's monopoly of knowledge might have usefully led to a more extended discussion of the role of 'organic state intellectuals'. The same is true when we turn to the chapter of the state and political struggle. The argument that the state must be conceived as the condensation in the relations of class forces, and that these contradictory relations are not external to the state but inscribed in its very materiality and in its functioning, is a welcome development from the rather all-encompassing picture of the State derivable from *Political Power and Social Classes*. These (pp. 127–139) are some of the most arresting and innovatory passages in *State, Power and Socialism*. They begin to break that knot in Marxist theory which has retarded the development of an adequate conception of the state for so long – best represented in terms of the opposed poles of the state as

‘functional to the needs/logic of capital’ and the state as ‘nothing but the product of class struggle’. We could have done with more on this theme, especially on the organizational role the state plays in Gramsci’s ‘unstable equilibrium of compromises’ and its articulation with popular struggles. The rather harder critique of Foucault offered here is welcome and apposite (pp. 146–163) – but, given the intrinsic novelty of the thesis, something of an unwarranted detour.

A Generative Openness

The chapter on the state and the economy is comprehensive, though less original. Both chapters are marked by a running engagement with a whole galaxy of enemies and errors – Balibar, the PCF’s theses on ‘state monopoly capitalism’, the logic-of-capital school, the Italians, Carrillo. The book picks up steam again in its final section, the first part of which deals with the ‘crisis’ of the capitalist state, the second with the prospect for ‘a democratic Socialism’. Poulantzas’s characterization of the ‘state in crisis’ as the state of ‘authoritarian statism’ is an important formulation, which nets certain critical features of Western European capitalist states in a period of crisis, and usefully distinguishes it from ‘fascism’. My only reservation is that Poulantzas does not deal sufficiently with how this progress towards ‘authoritarian statism’ has been secured at the base by a complementary shift in popular consent-to-authority – the product of a remarkable and intensive ideological struggle, of which ‘Thatcherism’ is a symptomatic example. This has led me, elsewhere, to argue that the thesis of ‘authoritarian statism’ needs to be complemented by a theory of ‘authoritarian populism’, which has come to characterize the evolution towards a more directly disciplinary form of the state. Poulantzas also omits the specific contribution which the ‘statism’ of Social Democracy in power in a period of capitalist crisis has made in providing ‘authoritarian populism’ with the popular contradictions on which it is able to work. But the debate is well joined.

Readers may find even more of interest in the remarkably open discussion of the forms of the state and political organization in the 'transition to Socialism', and the pertinence of democracy as an organizing theme. The critique of some aspects of Leninism, and the abandonment of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' formula is a mark of the distance which Poulantzas had travelled. The abandonment of 'dual power' in favour of a 'war of position' is effectively, if too summarily, announced. The affirmations that 'a real permanence and continuity of the institutions of representative democracy' is 'an essential condition of democratic socialism' will set hearts racing – and, no doubt, knives sharpening. The supporting arguments – against the fortress conception of the state, for Luxemburg against the Lenin of *What Is To Be Done?* and on how a strategy of 'real breaks' is distinguished from reformism, are tantalizingly brief. Promises, promises ... Their elaboration is the legacy which, regrettably, *State, Power, Socialism* must now leave in other hands.

It should be clear, by now, that *State, Power, Socialism* is a profoundly unsettled, and therefore unsettling, book. Its incompleteness throws up far more than Poulantzas was ready to secure within the framework of a coherent and integrated argument. The book opens up a series of Pandora's boxes. Often, there is a too-swift attempt to secure their lids again, before their untameable genies can escape. This produces a real theoretical unevenness in the book. Yet, this very unevenness also constitutes, by its reverse side, the stimulus of the book, its generative openness. Poulantzas's earlier books gained much of their force precisely from their completeness and consistency: some would say from their straining after a consistency which contributes to a certain impression of premature closure, of dogmatism and orthodoxy. He leaves us with a book which is, in many ways, clearly coming apart at the seams; where no single consistent theoretical framework is wide enough to embrace its internal diversity. It is strikingly *unfinished*. It offers us a picture of one of the most able and fluent of 'orthodox' Marxist-structuralist thinkers putting himself and his ideas at risk. This is Poulantzas adventuring ... The example it leaves to us – above all,

in its determination, at the end, to address questions of the utmost and immediate political relevance – is, in a very special way, exemplary. The ‘perfectly complete and rigorous text’ must wait for another moment. Given the way in which the search for correctness has systematically distorted Marxist intellectual work through its Althusserian, post-Althusserian, Lacanian and now its Foucauldean deluges, this infinite delay may be no bad thing.

This essay was first published in *New Left Review*, No. 119, January–February 1980

¹ An edited version of this interview was published in *Marxism Today*, July 1979.

² Alan Hunt (ed.), *Class and Class Structure*, London 1977.

³ First published in *Critique Communiste*, No. 16, June 1977; English translation in *International*, Vol. 4, No. 1, Autumn 1977.

⁴ *Economy and Society*, Vol. 9, 1979, No.2.

Preface

The urgency behind this book derives above all from the political situation in Europe, since although the question of democratic socialism is far from being everywhere on the agenda, it is being posed in a number of European countries. The urgency also stems from the emergence of the new phenomenon of State authoritarianism, which affects virtually all the so-called developed countries. Finally, it refers to the discussion on the State and power that is developing in France and elsewhere.

Work on this subject is normally presented either in a ‘theoretical’ form or as a directly political intervention into a precise conjuncture. As we know, that is an old habit. But I have tried to break free from it, since the current problems are sufficiently novel and important to warrant deeper examination. Besides, today less than ever can theory remain contented with an ivory tower.

It should be said, however, that the attempt to escape from this comfortable habit encounters certain problems that I have not always been able, or known how, to avoid. These all come down to the tendency, in one respect or the other, to do both too much and not enough. In the theoretical sense, I could not deal with all the problems that arise in these fields, but nor could I exhaust all the ones that I do tackle. The text therefore has no systematic order. While its parts fit together and refer to one another, they are intended above all to illuminate particular aspects of the various questions involved.

In the political sense, it was not possible for me to examine a concrete political conjuncture – especially that of France – in all its detail and specificity. In addition, the character of this work

accounts for the small place occupied by bibliographical references. Because the literature on these themes is so immense and because I wanted to avoid academic ponderousness, I deliberately set out to keep such references to the bare minimum – essentially those cases where I quote an author directly or where relevant research has been conducted in France.

As regards what are termed the classics of Marxism, the reader will find all the quotations in my previous books. But that is not the only reason why I have not cited them here. For there can be no such thing as orthodox Marxism. No-one can presume to behave as the keeper of holy dogmas and texts; and nor have I sought to clothe myself in them. It is not that I claim to speak in the name of some genuine Marxism, but rather the opposite. I assume responsibility for what I write and speak only in my own name.

Introduction

On the Theory of the State

I

Who today can escape the question of the State and power? Who indeed does not talk about it? The current political situation, not only in France but in the whole of Europe, is certainly one reason for its topicality. But talk is not enough: we have to understand, know and explain. And for that, we must not hesitate to go straight to the root of the problems. We also have to grasp means adequate to the end, without giving in to the temptation of using a fashionable language of analogy and metaphor. No doubt my initial observations will seem rather arid. But unlike Alphonse Allias, I do not unfortunately have the time to pass on more quickly to the very exciting later chapters.

Whether overtly or not, all twentieth-century political theory has basically posed the same question: what is the relationship between the State, power and social classes? I repeat *twentieth-century* theory, because such was not always the case, at least not in this form. Marxism first had to make some headway. But since Max Weber, all political theory has constituted either a dialogue with Marxism or an attack upon it. At any event, who today would dream of denying the relationship between power and the dominant classes? Now, while the countless varieties of such theory pose the same question, the great majority also give the same basic answer: first there is the State or power (which is explicated in numerous different ways) and

then the ruling classes establish with it specific relations of proximity or alliance. These relations are unravelled with varying degrees of sophistication, by reference to pressure groups acting on the State or flexible strategies spreading through the networks of power and taking shape in its structures. The account always comes down to the following: the State is constituted by an original, impenetrable kernel and by 'the rest', which the ruling classes, coming on to the scene as if by chance, are able to affect and penetrate. Such a way of conceiving the State essentially rests on a Janus image, or better still, on an updated form of the half-human, half-beast Centaur-Power that already haunted Machiavelli. In some authors it is the human side that is bound up with social classes, in others it is the animal side.

There is just one problem with this. How can it explain what everyone who is not blind can observe every day, not as a philosopher but as an ordinary citizen? For it is obvious that we are hemmed in more and more tightly by a State whose most detailed practices demonstrate its connection with particular, and extremely precise, interests.

One variant of Marxism, which is still tied to a certain political tradition, claims to provide us with an answer. The State is equivalent to political domination, so the argument goes, in that each dominant class constructs a State according to its requirements, bending it at will to suit its own interests. In that sense, every State is merely a class dictatorship.

This purely instrumental conception of the State reduces *the state apparatus* to *state power*, thus failing to touch the heart of the matter. It is not that the State has no 'class nature'. But the real problem is the one which concerns every political theory of the State and which was posed by the founders of Marxism themselves. Indeed, although they approached the problem from a specific angle, it may be said to have obsessed them in their work. They saw the State as a *special apparatus*, exhibiting a peculiar material framework that cannot be reduced to given relations of political domination. As regards the capitalist State, the question may be formulated as follows: why, in general, does the bourgeoisie seek to maintain its

domination by having recourse precisely to the national-popular State – to the modern representative State with all its characteristic institutions? For it is far from self-evident that the bourgeoisie would have chosen this particular form if it had been able to tailor a State to its requirements. While the bourgeoisie continues to derive many benefits from such a State, it is by no means always contented with it, any more than it was in the past.

This is a burning question, since it also concerns the present-day phenomenon of statism, in which, as we know only too well, the State's activity reaches into all spheres of everyday life. Here too, the variant of Marxism to which we have referred supplies a peremptory answer: these activities emanate in their entirety from the will of the dominant class or from that of its hired politicians. It is perfectly clear, however, that a number of state functions (e.g., social security) cannot be reduced to political domination alone.

Even if we try to leave behind the image of the State as a mere product or appendage of the dominant class, we encounter essentially the same snare in the traditional answer of political theory. And theorists of another, more modern variant of Marxism, do not always avoid the trap. Invoking the dual nature of the State, they see *on the one hand* (still the great divide!) a kernel of the State that somehow exists side by side with classes and the class struggle. To be sure, the explanation they give of this kernel is not that of the other theories of power and the State: in particular, they make reference to the productive forces, to which they reduce the relations of production. This is the famous economic structure from which classes and class struggle are absent – a structure that is supposed to give rise to a truly 'special' State and to the purely technical (or, in more dignified language, the purely social) measures of the State. Then *on the other hand*, there is the State's other nature, this time related to classes and the class struggle. So, we have a second State, a super-State or a State within the State, which is grafted on to the back of the first. This one does have a class nature, operating in our case as the State of the bourgeoisie and of its political domination. The second State comes along to pervert, vitiate, contaminate or deflect the functions of the first.

I spoke just now of a particular variant of Marxism. But the phenomenon is much broader, extending to that left-technocratic ideology which is currently wreaking such havoc. This is above all the case not when it points to the productive forces, but when, in more prosaic fashion, it invokes the increasing complexity of the State's technical-economic tasks in so-called post-industrial societies.

Such a line of argument does not then differ all that much from the age-old answer of political theory, whether in its traditional form or in one better adapted to the tastes of the day. For all these theorists, there is a free-standing state power which is only afterwards utilized by the dominant classes in various ways. Quite frankly, they should talk not of the class nature, but of the class utilization of the State. The term mentioned earlier, the dual nature of the State, does not encompass the reality of these analyses: namely, the view that the State's true nature lies in the first, original State, while the second is just a question of habit. Just as political theory has for centuries conceived of the State as half-human, half-beast, so the genuine State or real power are here located not on the shady side (the side of classes) but on the other, sunny side.

There is a purpose behind these schematic representations. For if all political theory and all theories of socialism (including Marxism) revolve around this question, this is because it constitutes a real problem. While not of course the only one to arise in this field, it is nevertheless of central importance; and, as the reader will have guessed, it also involves the question of the transformation of the State in the transition to democratic socialism. Anyway, there is only one road that leads somewhere, only one answer that can break the vicious circle. In fact, we may begin by expressing this answer very simply: the State really does exhibit a peculiar material framework that can by no means be reduced to mere political domination. The state apparatus – that special and hence formidable something – is not exhausted in state power. Rather political domination is itself inscribed in the institutional materiality of the State. Although the State is not created *ex nihilo* by the ruling classes, nor is it simply taken over by them: state power (that of the bourgeoisie, in the case of the capitalist State) is written into this

materiality. Thus, while all the State's actions are not reducible to political domination, their composition is nevertheless marked by it.

It will be no easy matter to demonstrate these propositions. For when the simplest questions are the real ones, they are also the most complex. In order to avoid losing ourselves in the maze, we must keep hold of the guiding thread: the basis of the material framework of power and the State has to be sought in the relations of production and social division of labour – but not in the sense which is normally understood and which has come to be accepted. By these terms I do not refer to an economic structure from which classes, the class struggle and forms of power are absent. Finally, it is because this constitutes the linchpin that I shall cling on to it in order to enter the current, much broader discussion on the State and power.

II

We must begin then by briefly recalling certain analyses that I have made in previous books.

The articulation of the State to the relations of production at once poses the question of the relationship between the State and the 'economic base'. We have to be quite clear about what is meant by 'economic base', since this will determine our notion of the way in which the State is bound up with the relations of production and the class struggle.

Today more than ever it is necessary to distance ourselves from the formalist-economist position according to which the economy is composed of elements that remain unchanged through the various modes of production – elements possessing an almost Aristotelian *nature* or *essence* and able to reproduce and regulate themselves by a kind of internal combinatory. As we know, that has been a constant temptation throughout the history of Marxism, and it is still with us today. Converging in this respect with traditional economism, such a conception obscures the role of struggles lodged in the very heart

of the relations of production and exploitation. Furthermore, it treats the space or field of the economic (and consequently that of the state-political) as essentially immutable, as possessing intrinsic limits that are sketched out once and for all by its supposed self-reproduction. At the level of relations between State and economy, this ultimately rather ancient view of things can give rise to two misinterpretations, whose effects most frequently appear in a combined manner.

First, it may give weight to an old misunderstanding that results from a topological representation of 'base' and 'superstructure': namely, the conception of the State as a mere appendage or reflection of the economic sphere, devoid of its own space and reducible to the economy. According to this notion, the relation between State and economy is at best a matter of the State's famous 'rebound action' on an economic base considered as essentially self-sufficient. What is involved here is the traditional mechanistic-economist conception of the State – one whose implications and consequences are by now sufficiently well known for me to pass straight on.

The formalist position can also give rise to a second misunderstanding, in which the social totality is conceived in the form of *instances* or *levels* that are by nature or by essence autonomous from one another. Once the economy is apprehended in terms of a series of elements occupying their own spaces and remaining unchanged through the diverse modes of production (slavery, feudalism, capitalism), the conception will be extended by analogy to the superstructural instances (the State, ideology). It will then be the *a posteriori* combination of these inherently autonomous instances that will produce the various modes of production, since the essence of these instances is prior to their mutual relation within a mode of production.

This conception is again grounded on representation of an economic space intrinsically capable of reproducing itself. But instead of regarding the superstructural instances as appendages or reflections of the economy, it threatens to turn them into substances, furnishing them with an independence of the economic

base that remains constant through the various modes of production. The essential autonomy of the superstructural instances (the State, ideology) would then serve to legitimize the autonomy, self-sufficiency and self-reproduction of the economy. We can thus see the theoretical collusion of these two conceptions, for which the links between the State and the economic sphere are in principle relations of exteriority, whatever the forms used to designate them.

The constructivist image of 'base' and 'superstructure', which is supposed to allow the determining role of the economic sphere to be visualized after a fashion, cannot in fact provide a correct representation of the articulation of social reality, nor therefore of that determining role itself. It has even proved to be disastrous in more ways than one, and there is everything to be gained from not relying upon it. For my own part, I have long ceased to use it in analysis of the State.

These conceptions also have an effect on the delimitation and construction of objects for theoretical investigation. For they both admit the possibility and legitimacy of *a general theory of the economy* taken as an epistemologically distinct object – the theory, that is to say, of the transhistorical functioning of economic space. In this perspective, the differences presented by the object (the economy) from one mode of production to another are to be explained purely in terms of a self-regulating and rigidly demarcated economic space, whose *internal* metamorphoses and transformations are unravelled by the general theory of the economy ('economic science'). It is at the level of the so-called superstructures that the two conceptions diverge, finishing with opposite, and equally false, results. For the first, any specific examination of the superstructural fields as objects in their own right is quite simply inadmissible, since the general theory of the economy provides the keys to explaining the superstructures as mechanical reflections of the economic base. For the second, by contrast, this general theory has to be duplicated by analogy in a *general theory* of every superstructural field – in this case, the political field of the State. This theory, too, must have as its specific and separable object the reality of the State across the various

modes of production; as an epistemological object, the State is conceived as having immutable boundaries fixed through its exclusion from the a-temporal domain of the economy. Thus, the intrinsic borders of the economy-object, which is deemed capable of reproducing itself by its inner laws, lead on to intrinsic borders of the State – a State, that is, with an immutable space enveloping the equally immutable space of the economy.

These are false conceptions, then. But what is the truth of the matter?

1. Let us first recall that the space or site of the economy is that of the relations of production and exploitation, and of the extraction of surplus labour (that is, in the capitalist mode of production, the reproduction and accumulation of capital, and the extraction of surplus-value). Now, neither in pre-capitalist modes nor in capitalism has this space ever formed a hermetically sealed level, capable of self-reproduction and possessing its own 'laws' of internal functioning. *The political field of the State* (as well as the sphere of ideology) *has always, in different forms, been present in the constitution and reproduction of the relations of production.* (This was also true of the pre-monopoly stage of capitalism, despite the widespread illusion that the liberal State involved itself in the economy only for the purposes of creating and maintaining the 'material infrastructure' of production.) Of course, the position of the State vis-à-vis the economy has changed not only with the mode of production, but also with the stage and phase of capitalism itself. But in no manner can these changes ever be inscribed in a topological image of exteriority, according to which the State, as an instance always external to the economy, now intervenes in the relations of production themselves thereby penetrating economic space, and now remains outside that space acting only on its periphery. The position of the State vis-à-vis the economy is never

anything but the modality of the State's presence in the constitution and reproduction of the relations of production.

2. It follows that neither the concept of the economy nor that of the State can have the same extension, field or meaning in the various modes of production. Even at an abstract level, these modes cannot be grasped as purely economic forms deriving from an ever-changing combination of inherently constant economic elements that move in a closed and self-limited space. But nor do they constitute combinations of these elements with unchanging elements of other instances (the State) conceived as immutable substances. In short, a mode of production does not arise out of the combination of various instances, all of which possess an inalterable structure before they come into relation with one another. It is rather the mode of production itself – that totality of economic, political and ideological determinations – which fixes the boundaries of these spaces, sketching out their fields and defining their respective elements. They are *from the very beginning* constituted by their mutual relation and articulation – a process that is effected in each mode of production through the determining role of the relations of production. But that determination always takes place within the unity of the mode of production.

3. Although, in the pre-capitalist modes of production, the direct producers were separated from the labour-object and the means of production through the economic property relation, they were not separated from them in the second constituent of the relations of production, namely, the relationship of possession. In feudalism, for example, the peasants and serfs were 'tied' to these objects and means, preserving relative mastery of the labour process without the direct intervention of the landlord. This resulted precisely in what Marx called the close 'overlapping' or 'mixedness' of the State and the economy. The exercise of legitimate violence is here implicit in the relations of production, since surplus labour has to be extracted

from direct producers who possess the object and means of their labour. Because of these clear-cut relations between the State and the economy, their contour, scope and significance are quite other than in the capitalist mode of production.

In capitalism, the direct producers are entirely dispossessed of the object and means of their labour: they are separated from them not only in the economic property relation but also in the relationship of possession. We witness here the emergence of 'free labourers' possessing nothing but their labour power and unable to set the labour process in motion without the owner, whose involvement is juridically represented by the contractual buying and selling of labour power. It is this very structure of capitalist relations of production that makes a commodity of labour power itself and converts surplus labour into surplus-value. As regards the relationship between State and economy, this structure further generates the relative *separation* of the State and the economic sphere (accumulation of capital and production of surplus-value) – a separation which underlies the characteristic institutional framework of the capitalist State, since it maps out the new spaces and respective fields of the State and the economy. This separation of the State and the space of the reproduction of capital is therefore specific to capitalism: it must not be understood as a particular effect of essentially autonomous instances composed of elements that remain constant whatever the mode of production. It is rather a peculiar feature of capitalism, insofar as it maps out new spaces for the State and the economy by transforming their very elements.

What is involved here is not a real externality, such as would exist if the State intervened in the economy only from the outside. *The separation is nothing other than the capitalist form of the presence of the political in the constitution and reproduction of the relations of production.* This separation of State and economy and the presence-action of the former in the latter – in effect, two expressions of a single pattern of relations between State and economy under capitalism – traverse all the historical stages and phases of the mode of production; albeit in changing forms, they are rooted in the hard core of capitalist relations of production. Just as the State was not,

in the pre-monopoly stage, really external to the space of the reproduction of capital, so the State's role in monopoly capitalism, especially the current phase, does not involve abolition of the separation of State and economy. The analysis that asserts the contrary is now quite widespread, but it is erroneous with regard both to the relations between State and economy in the pre-monopoly ('competitive' or 'liberal') stage of capitalism, and to the equivalent relations in the current stage and phase. The substantive changes undergone by these relations through the history of capitalism, resulting as they do from changes in the relations of production, are just 'transformed forms' of this separation and of the presence-action of the State in the relations of production.

Now, the very fact that the space, field and respective concepts of the state-political and the economy (relations of production) present themselves in different ways according to the mode of production, leads to a conclusion that runs counter to all formalist theoreticism. For just as there can be no general theory of the economy (no 'economic science') having a theoretical object that remains unchanged through the various modes of production, so can there be no 'general theory' of the state-political (in the sense of a political 'science' or 'sociology') having a similarly constant object. Such a theory would be legitimate only if the State constituted an instance that was by nature or essence autonomous and possessing immutable boundaries, and if that instance carried within itself the laws of its own historical reproduction. (I am here using the term general theory in the strong sense: that is, to denote a theoretical system both capable of explicating, on the basis of general and necessary propositions and as particular expressions of a single theoretical object, the types of State that arise in the various modes of production, and at the same time capable of unfolding the laws of transformation that characterize the object's metamorphoses, on its own constant ground, from one mode of production to another – that is to say, the passage or transition from one State to another.) What is perfectly legitimate, however, is a *theory of the capitalist State* which forges its specific object and concept: this is made possible by the separation of the space of the State and that of the

economy in the capitalist mode of production. In the same way, a theory of the capitalist economy is possible because of the separation of the State and the relations of production/labour process.

We may, of course, put forward *general theoretical propositions concerning the State*. But these would have the same status as those of Marx relating to ‘production in general’: that is, they could have no claim to the status of a general theory of the State. It is important to mention this point, given the stupendous dogmatism with which certain general propositions contained in the classics of Marxism are still being presented as the ‘Marxist-Leninist theory of the State’. This was evident among those contributors to the recent PCF debate who wished to ‘retain’ the notion of the dictatorship of the proletariat.¹

There is certainly no general theory of the State to be found in the Marxist classics: not just because their authors were for one reason or another unable to complete one, but because there can never be any such theory. In fact, this is now a question of great topicality, as is illustrated particularly by the debate on the Italian left. In two recent articles, which have aroused enormous interest, Bobbio has re-emphasized the fact that Marxism has no general theory of the State. A number of Italian Marxists have felt obliged to reply that such a theory exists ‘in embryo’ in the classics of Marxism, and that its development constitutes a necessary and legitimate task.² But even though the reasons given by Bobbio are not the right ones, the fact remains that there is no general theory of the State because there can never be one. Here we must resist all those criticisms, whether advanced in good or in bad faith, which reproach Marxism for its supposed failings with regard to a general theory of power and the political. For it is precisely one of the merits of Marxism that, in this and other cases, it thrust aside the grand metaphysical flights of so-called political philosophy – the vague and nebulous theorizations of an extreme generality and abstractness that claim to lay bare the great secrets of History, the Political, the State, and Power. More than ever should this be noted today, when, in the face of the pressing political situation in Europe and especially France,

we are once again witnessing the typically escapist phenomenon of large-scale systematizations – First and Final Philosophies of Power that, more often than not, simply regurgitate the stale terminology of the most traditional spiritualist metaphysics. They do this by cheerfully flooding the concept market with the grandiose terroristic and mystifying Notions of the Despot, the Master, and a few more of the same stamp: from Deleuze to the ‘new’ philosophers, an exhaustive list would be long indeed.³ The philosophical fraternity may be enjoying itself in France, but in the end none of this is really very funny. For the genuine problems are too serious and complex to be resolved by pompous and ultra-simplistic generalizations that have never succeeded in explaining anything whatsoever.

This is not to say that there are no deficiencies in the Marxist analysis of power and the State; but they are not where they have been sought. What has been very costly for the popular masses throughout the world is not Marxism’s lack of a general theory of power and the State, but precisely that eschatological and prophetic dogmatism which has for so long tried to fill the ‘gap’ with a ‘Marxist-Leninist theory’ of the State. The real, and thus important, deficiencies of Marxism in this respect concern those very fields where theorization is legitimate. In *Political Power and Social Classes*⁴ and in other works, I have shown that these deficiencies bear, for reasons I attempt to explain, on *both* the general theoretical propositions *and* the theory of the capitalist State. One result is the still inadequate analysis of the regime and State in the countries of the East.

Thus, although I shall seek below to deepen and elaborate the general propositions on the State, I shall do this not before, but step by step with an analysis of the capitalist State itself, which really is a possible and legitimate theoretical object. I am not guided in this by the long-standing and simplistic belief of Hegelian-Marxist historicism to the effect that capitalism constitutes the progressive and linear flowering of ‘buds’ contained in pre-capitalist modes of production – much as man is supposed to explain the ape. Too many theorists of power are still haunted by the idea that the capitalist State is the perfect materialization of some *Urstaat* constantly

burrowing its way through historical reality, and that it therefore provides the ground on which to present general propositions on the State. (Of quite another order is the problem of the historical conditions – capitalism – that make possible the formulation of such propositions.) The specific autonomy of political space under capitalism – a circumstance that legitimizes theorizations of that space – is not the flawless realization of the State's supposed autonomy of essence or nature, but the result of a separation from the relations of production that is peculiar to capitalism. The theory of the capitalist State cannot be simply deduced from general propositions on the State. If I present the two at the same time, it is because these propositions may best be illustrated by the object that can give rise to a specific theory: namely, the capitalist State.

To the extent that there can be no general theory of the State, posing general laws of its transformation through the various modes of production, so too can there be no such theory of the transition from one State to another – *especially not of the passage from the capitalist to the socialist State*. A theory of the capitalist State provides important elements regarding the State of transition to socialism. But not only do these elements have a different status from that of the theory of the capitalist State, they enjoy a quite unique status even among general theoretical propositions on the State. They can never be anything other than *applied theoretical-strategic notions*, serving, to be sure, as guides to action, but at the very most in the manner of road-signs. A 'model' of the State of transition to socialism cannot be drawn up: not as a universal model capable of being concretized in given cases, nor even as an infallible, theoretically guaranteed recipe for one or several countries. Certainly the analyses I myself shall make of the State of transition to socialism in Western Europe can have no such pretensions. We have to make a choice once and for all: and as we now know, one cannot ask any theory, however scientific it may be, to give more than it possesses – not even Marxism, which remains a genuine theory of action. *There is always a structural distance between theory and practice, between theory and the real.*

In fact, these two distances are but one. Marxism is no more 'responsible' for what is happening in the East than are the Enlightenment philosophers for totalitarian regimes in the West. This is true not in the trivial sense that pure Marxism is innocent of the deformations in the East, but because the distance between theory and the real holds good for every theory, including Marxism. And it overlaps the distance between theory and practice. To wish to close this gap involves making any theory say no matter what, or doing no matter what in the name of theory.

For this distance does not refer to a trench that cannot be filled, quite the contrary. As it happens, some are always lying in wait, ready to throw themselves into filling this ever-open gap. However liberating a theory may be, the 'purity' of its discourse is never enough to exclude the possibility of its being made to serve totalitarian ends by precisely those bricklayers who set to work on the distance between theory and practice – those people skilled in application of texts and reduction of the real who can always lay claim to the theory in all its purity. The blame, then, does not lie with Marx, nor for that matter with Plato, Jesus, Rousseau or Voltaire. The distance between theory and the real always persists despite the effort to fill it. Stalin is not Marx's 'fault', any more than Napoleon I was the fault of Rousseau, Franco of Jesus, Hitler of Nietzsche, or Mussolini of Sorel (even though their thoughts were employed, sometimes in their original purity, to give cover to these totalitarian systems).

All this cuts across the positions of the 'new' philosophers, who, as far as I am aware, have found no better way of tackling the problem than to repeat with much less intelligence and subtlety the arguments of Karl Popper.⁵ Thus, the totalitarian universe is supposed to derive from the 'closed' theoretical systems, or even from the *statist* aspect, of the major thinkers who inspired them. In such a view of things, the distance between theory and the real explains what would otherwise remain a monumental paradox: namely, the fact that totalitarian systems have referred precisely to thinkers who, in the context of their age, were unquestionably much less *statist* than others – to Jesus, Rousseau, Nietzsche, Sorel, and

finally Marx, whose constant and primary concern was with the withering away of the State.

To return to my previous point: disregard of this distance between theory and the real, or the wish at all costs to reduce the gap between theory and practice, involves putting no matter what into the mouth of Marxism. Therefore, we cannot ask Marxism (this time, the 'true' Marxism) to provide an infallible formula, purged of all deviations, with which to ensure a genuine transition to democratic socialism. For it is no more able to give this kind of answer than it has been to plot the course of events in the East.

This is not to say that Marxism does not have a decisive role to play in analysing the State in the countries of so-called 'real socialism' (the USSR, Eastern Europe, China), where a certain kind of transition to socialism has been attempted with the results that we know. (I say merely 'a decisive role', because Marxism alone cannot explain everything.) Clearly such an analysis cannot content itself with historical investigation of 'the concrete conditions of these countries' or with an examination of the political strategy that was followed, however essential these may be. But does this mean that we need a general Marxist theory of the State that is capable of elucidating the totalitarian aspects of power in these countries – a sort of equivalent of the simplistic generalizations advanced in a terroristic tone by the various Gulag experts on the other side? I do not think so, despite, or rather because of, the fact that the problem of totalitarianism is so frighteningly real. It can never be understood in its full complexity by means of totalizing generalizations. Let's put it bluntly: in order to clear the way for analysis of modern totalitarianism and of its various aspects in the East, we must deepen and elaborate not only the general theoretical propositions on the State, but also the theory of the capitalist State itself, as it is connected with the relations of production and the capitalist social division of labour. I shall tackle both these tasks in examining the roots of totalitarianism.

Of course, all we can do here is provide the initial points of reference. The present-day State in Eastern Europe and China is a specific and highly complex phenomenon, and it can by no means

be reduced to, or treated as a simple variant of, the capitalist State that forms the principal theme of this book. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the hidden roots of certain totalitarian features of the East lie essentially, though not exclusively (since capitalism is not the source of all evil⁶), in what I shall intentionally term *capitalist aspects* of this State, and of the relations of production and social division of labour that underlie it. This term should be understood in a purely indicative sense. For I shall not enter into the problem of whether these represent capitalist survivals in a particular kind of authoritarian socialism, effects of a capitalist environment-encirclement on socialist countries, or rather the arrival of these countries at a new but very real form of state capitalism. This problem is sufficiently important to merit a separate investigation. But my own position will carry certain consequences: given that some of my analyses relate not only to the State in general, but also to the capitalist State as it is connected with the relations of production and social division of labour, they will also apply *mutatis mutandis* to the States in the East. The reader should constantly bear this in mind, and in any case I recall it at certain points in the text.

Lastly, I should point out that the theory of the capitalist State can attain a genuinely scientific status only if it manages to grasp the reproduction and historical mutations of its object at the very place where they occur – that is to say, in the various social formations that are the sites of the class struggle. Thus, it will be necessary to explain on this basis the forms of State that correspond to the diverse stages and phases of capitalism (the liberal State, the interventionist State, and so on); the differentiation between these and exceptional forms of State (fascism, military dictatorship, Bonapartism); and the character of the regimes that exist in various concrete countries. *The theory of the capitalist State cannot be isolated from the history of its constitution and reproduction.*

There is no question here of relapsing into empiricism and positivism, of constructing the theoretical object of the capitalist State, after the manner of a model or ideal type, through induction or comparative collation of the specific traits of the various capitalist States. Quite simply, while we retain the distinction

between *mode of production* (an abstract-formal object in its economic, ideological and political determinations) and concrete *social formations* (articulations of several modes of production at a given historical moment), we must not regard these social formations as merely heaped up concretizations of abstractly reproduced modes of production; nor, therefore, should a concrete State be considered as a simple realization of the-State-of-the-capitalist-mode-of-production. Social formations are the actual sites of the existence and reproduction of modes of production. They are thus also the sites of the various forms of State, none of which can simply be deduced from the capitalist type of State understood as denoting an abstract-formal object. To situate the capitalist State first and foremost with reference to the relations of production is not the same as to construct on that basis the theoretical object of that State; it does not give rise, that is, to an ideo-typical object susceptible of being particularized or concretized in various ways according to the course of the class struggle in given social formations. A theory of the capitalist State can be elaborated only if it is brought into relation with the history of political struggles under capitalism.

III

We should now sum up what has been said so far. Although the relations of production delimit the given field of the State, it has a role of its own in the formation of these same relations. The way in which the State is bound up with the relations of production constitutes its primary relation with social classes and the class struggle. As regards the capitalist State, its relative separation from the relations of production – which is produced by those relations themselves – is the basis of its organizational framework and already maps out the mode of its relation to social classes and the class struggle.

In reality, the production process is grounded on the *unity* of the labour process and the relations of production (the latter themselves consisting in the dual relationship of economic property and possession). This unity is realized through the *primacy* of the relations of production over the labour process – over what are often referred to as ‘productive forces’ and understood to include technology and the technical process. The view of traditional economism, which leads directly on to technicism, is that the relations of production are ultimately nothing other than the crystallization, envelope or reflection of a technological process of the productive forces themselves; in this way, its conception of the relations between base and superstructure is carried right into the heart of the production process. For us, however, it is the primacy of the relations of production over the productive forces that gives to their articulation the form of a *process* of production and reproduction. The productive forces do indeed have a materiality of their own that can by no means be ignored; but they are always organized under given relations of production. Thus, while the two may enter into contradiction with each other and undergo forms of uneven development, they always do so within a process that stems from the primacy of the relations of production. It is not the passage from the windmill to the steam-mill that explains the transition from feudalism to capitalism. Marx himself stressed this in all his works, including the later ones, despite certain ambiguities which resulted from the influence of the Enlightenment philosophy of technical progress on his thought.

From this primacy flows the presence of political (and ideological) relations within the relations of production: the latter, like their constituent relation of possession and economic property, find expression in class *powers* that are organically articulated to the political and ideological relations which concretize and legitimize them. These relations neither represent simple additions to already existing relations of production, nor do they merely react upon them in the mode of absolute exteriority or temporal sequence. They are themselves present in the constitution of the relations of production, in ways that vary with each mode of production. We should

therefore rid ourselves of the now widespread idea that political (and ideological) relations enter only into the reproduction of the relations of production, which for their part retain all the original purity of self-generation. It is precisely because politico-ideological relations are already present in the actual constitution of the relations of production that they play such an essential role in their reproduction; that is also why the process of production and exploitation involves reproduction of the relations of politico-ideological domination and subordination. This elementary datum is at the root of the State's presence in the constitution and reproduction of the relations of production, as the factor which concentrates, condenses, materializes and incarnates politico-ideological relations in a form specific to the given mode of production.

It is on the basis of this same datum that the State is first inserted in the constitution and reproduction of social classes – in short, in the class struggle. Insofar as they are bound up with the relations of politico-ideological domination and subordination, the relations of production delineate objective positions (social classes) which are themselves *only distinctions in the social division of labour as a whole* (relations of production – which play the dominant role – political relations, ideological relations). This consequence of the primacy of the relations of production over the productive forces also has implications for the position of social classes within the relations of production. It is *the social division of labour*, such as it expresses itself in the presence of the political and ideological relations within the production process, which has primacy over the technical division of labour. This is not to say that the technical division is reducible to the social, but that it never exists and is never reproduced except as incorporated in the latter.

Thus, even at the level of the relations of production, these class positions finding expression in powers consist in class practices and struggles. Just as the relations of production and the social division of labour do not constitute an economic structure outside (before) social classes, *so they do not belong to a field external to power and class struggle*. There are no social classes prior to their opposition in

struggle: they are not posed ‘in themselves’ in the relations of production only to enter into struggle (become classes ‘for themselves’) afterwards and elsewhere. To situate the State with reference to the relations of production is to chart the original contours of its presence in the class struggle.

¹ See especially Etienne Balibar, *On the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, NLB 1977.

² This whole controversy has been published as *Il marxismo e lo Stato*, 1976.

³ Gilles Deleuze and F. Guattari, *L’anti-Oedipe*, Paris 1975. As regards the current of ‘new philosophers’, I shall refer below to two works: B. H. Lévy, *La barbarie à visage humain*, Paris 1977, and André Glucksmann, *Les maitres penseurs*, Paris 1977.

⁴ NLB 1973.

⁵ Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, London 1946.

⁶ I owe this expression to Jean Daniel.

The Ideological Apparatuses: Does the State equal Repression plus Ideology?

The State's role in the constitution of the relations of production and in the delimitation-reproduction of social classes derives from the fact that it does not confine itself to the exercise of organized physical repression. The State plays an equally specific role in organizing ideological relations and the dominant ideology. Nor, as we shall see in a moment, is the State's highly active role restricted to the couplet repression + ideology.

Ideology does not consist merely in a system of ideas or representations: it also involves a series of *material practices*, embracing the customs and life-style of the agents and setting like cement in the totality of social (including political and economic) practices. Ideological relations are themselves essential to the constitution of the relations of possession and economic property, and to the social division of labour at the heart of the relations of production. The State cannot enshrine and reproduce political domination exclusively through repression, force or 'naked' violence, but directly calls upon ideology to legitimize violence and contribute to a consensus of those classes and fractions which are dominated from the point of view of political power. Ideology is always class ideology, never socially neutral. In particular, the ruling ideology constitutes an essential power of the ruling class.

The dominant ideology, then, is embodied in the state apparatuses. One of their functions is to elaborate, inculcate and

reproduce that ideology – a function of considerable importance in the constitution and reproduction of social classes, class domination, and the social division of labour. This is true *par excellence* of those which have been termed *ideological state apparatuses*, whether they formally belong to the State or whether they retain a ‘private’ juridical character (e.g., the Church or religious apparatus, the educational apparatus, the official information network of radio and television, the cultural apparatus). Of course, the dominant ideology also enters into the organization of other apparatuses (army, police, judicial system, prisons, state administration) whose principal responsibility is the exercise of legitimate physical violence.

However, the distinction between repressive and ideological apparatuses has quite clear limits. Before coming to these, I should mention the repressive role of the State, which is so self-evident that it is hardly ever discussed. Only too often does emphasis on the State’s role in ideological relations lead to underestimation of its repressive functions.⁷

By repression should be understood first and foremost organized physical violence in the most material sense of the term: *violence to the body*. One essential condition of the establishment and maintenance of power is the coercion of bodies and the threat of violence or death. To be sure, the body is not simply a biological entity, but a political institution: the relations of the State to the body are thus considerably more complex and extensive than those of repression. Nevertheless, the State is always rooted in its physical constraint, manipulation and consumption of bodies. In every State, this takes place in two ways: through institutions which actualize bodily constraint and the permanent threat of mutilation (prison, army, police, and so on); and through a *bodily order* which both institutes and manages bodies by bending and moulding them into shape and inserting them in the various institutions and apparatuses. As a material reality, the State is synonymous with a kind of stunting regimentation and consumption of persons’ bodies – in other words, with its incarnation in the very flesh of the subjects-objects of state violence. Since all bodies are political, we cannot speak here of bodily mortification by the State: for that would point

to the image of an original body, which, while naturally free, is later politically distorted. But within the bodily order, it is still necessary to have personnel who train and discipline bodies with suitable physical devices. We shall see the peculiar features of the capitalist State when we go more deeply into the question of repression under the heading of law.

However, the very distinction between repressive and ideological apparatuses cannot be sustained except at a purely descriptive and indicative level. The underlying Gramscian conception may have the merit that it both extends the space of the State to the ideological institutions and emphasises the State's presence within the relations of production through its role in ideological relations. (But the fact remains that it operates in a restrictive manner.) As I pointed out at the time, the conception as systematized by Althusser⁸ rests on the idea of a State that acts and functions through repression and ideological inculcation, and *nothing else*. It assumes that the State's efficacy somehow lies in what it forbids, rules out, and prevents; or in its capacity to deceive, lie, obscure, hide, and lead people to believe what is false. The restrictive character of its analysis of the State's role is in no way changed by locating this ideological function in material practices. For according to this conception, the economic is an instance capable of self-reproduction and self-regulation, in which the State serves merely to lay down the *negative rules* of the economic 'game'. Political power can only frame the economy: it cannot enter into it through its own positivity, since its reason for existence is to prevent, through repression and ideology, any unsettling encroachment in the economy. Of course, this old legalist image comes from the juridical-political philosophy of the early bourgeois State, and it has never corresponded to the reality of the latter.

With such a conception we clearly cannot understand the first thing about the State's peculiar role in the constitution of the relations of production: neither with respect to the transition from feudalism to capitalism and the so-called liberal stage of capitalism; nor *a fortiori* in the case of the present-day State, which intervenes at the very heart of the reproduction of capital. In short, the State

also acts in a positive fashion, *creating, transforming and making* reality. It goes without saying that repression and ideological inculcation are present in the materiality of the State's current functions. But unless we are to play with words, it is hardly possible to grasp the State's economic activities by referring exclusively to this dual modality.

Moreover, to chart in this way the hold of power over the oppressed and downtrodden masses inevitably leads to an idealist, police conception of power, according to which the State dominates the masses either through police terror or internalized repression, (it matters little which), or else through trickery and illusion. Such a conclusion is here inescapable, because, even though care is taken not to identify ideology and 'false consciousness', the very term ideology can remain meaningful only if ideological procedures/operations are held to comprise a structure of concealment-inversion. But it is quite simply wrong to believe that the State only acts in this manner: the relation of the masses to power and the State – in what is termed among other things a *consensus* – *always possesses a material substratum*. I say 'among other things', since in working for class hegemony, the State acts within an unstable equilibrium of compromises between the dominant classes and the dominated. The State therefore continually adopts material measures which are of positive significance for the popular masses, even though these measures represent so many concessions imposed by the struggle of the subordinate classes. This essential material aspect cannot be explained if the relationship between State and popular masses is reduced to the couplet repression-ideology. By the way, such a reduction also underlies (with the stress laid on consent) a whole series of current conceptions of power, especially those expressed in discussing the phenomenon of fascism.⁹ Thus, the masses are supposed to have 'wanted' repression or to have been cheated by fascist ideology. However, to analyse the State solely with the categories of repression-prohibition and ideology-concealment obviously leads one to *subjectivize* the reasons for consent (why people say yes to the prohibition) and to locate them either in ideology-trickery ('fascism deluded the masses') or in

the wish for repression and love of the Master. In reality, even fascism was obliged to undertake a series of positive measures, such as absorption of unemployment, protection and sometimes improvement of the real purchasing power of certain sections of the popular masses, and the introduction of so-called social legislation. (Of course, this did not exclude increased exploitation through a rise in relative surplus-value – quite the contrary.) The invariable presence of ideological allurements does not therefore change the fact that the State also acted by producing a material substratum for mass consensus – a substratum which, while not the same as its ideological presentation in state discourse, was not simply reducible to propaganda.

These are doubtless not the only examples of genuinely positive action by the State. But for the moment, they should be enough to show that its field of activity goes far beyond repression and ideology.

Representation of the State by means of the couplet repression-ideology is dogged by a further misconception: that is to say, reproduction of the dominant ideology is confounded with straightforward concealment or dissimulation of the State's designs and objectives; the State is thus supposed to produce a uniformly mystifying discourse and never to take a step unless it is masked and shrouded in secrecy.

Such a description is false in several respects. One of the State's functions that goes beyond the mechanism of concealment-inversion peculiar to ideology concerns its strictly *organizational* role vis-à-vis the dominant class, including that of *formulating and openly expressing the tactics required to reproduce its power*. The State does not produce a unified discourse, but several discourses that are adapted to the various classes and differentially incarnated in its apparatuses according to their class destination. Or, to put it in another way, it produces a discourse that is broken into segments and fragments according to lines intersecting the strategy of power. The discourse or segments of discourse addressed to the dominant class and its various fractions (sometimes also to supporting classes) are quite explicitly discourses of organization. If the State and the

tactics it embodies are never entirely concealed, this is not because corridor-talk finally becomes known regardless of the State's will, but because at a certain level tactical elaboration is an integral part of the State's provisions to organize the dominant classes: it appears on the state arena by virtue of its role in *representing* these classes (as was shown very clearly by de Gaulle's famous, and not in the least 'ideological' speech in May '68 ...). There is an apparent contradiction here: virtually everything that the bourgeoisie and its power have carried out has been publicly stated and listed in one state discourse or another, even if it has not always been understood. Hitler, for example, never concealed his intention to exterminate the Jews. Not only does the State proclaim the truth of its power at a certain 'real' level; it also adopts the necessary means to elaborate and formulate political tactics. It produces knowledge and techniques of knowledge which go far beyond ideology, while naturally remaining imbricated in it. Thus, 'bourgeois' statistics and the state statistical bodies cannot be treated as mere mystification, but constitute elements of state knowledge to be used for the purposes of political strategy.

Of course, not anyone can talk the language of the State, and nor can it come from just anywhere. There is indeed a secrecy of power and bureaucracy – a secrecy, however, which is not the same as a one-way role of silence. It rather has the precise function of creating recognized networks within the State that will favour pronouncements from certain of its sites. With regard to the dominant class, bureaucratic silence often serves as the organizer of speech. If the State does not always express its strategy in discourse addressed to the dominant class, this is most frequently not because it is afraid of revealing its aims to the dominated, but because this strategy is only the outcome of the clash between various tactics expressing themselves within the State and the circuits, networks and apparatuses that incarnate them. Since the strategy is therefore often not known in advance within (and by) the State itself, it is not always susceptible to rational formulation.

The index measuring the ideological composition of state discourse (as well as of its material practices) will thus fluctuate and change

according to the class or class-fraction to which the State addresses itself and upon which it acts. The truth of power often escapes the popular masses. But the State does not intentionally conceal it from everyone: rather, for infinitely more complex reasons, the masses do not manage to hear the state discourse directed to the dominant classes.

Finally, a conception of state activity exclusively based on the couplet repression-ideology has the following consequences with regard to the state apparatuses:

(a) The exercise of power is split between two groups: the repressive and the ideological state apparatuses. This apportionment diminishes the specificity of the *economic state apparatus* by dissolving it into the various repressive and ideological apparatuses; it thus prevents us from locating the state network in which the power of the hegemonic fraction of the bourgeoisie is essentially concentrated; and it obscures the character of the modalities required to transform this economic apparatus in the transition to socialism – as distinct from those required to transform the repressive and ideological apparatuses.

(b) Certain apparatuses are distinguished in an almost nominalist or essentialist manner according to whether they are repressive (act mainly through repression) or ideological (act mainly through ideology). But this distinction is itself highly debatable. Depending on the form of State and regime and on the phase of reproduction of capitalism, a number of apparatuses can slide from one sphere to the other and assume new functions either as additions to, or in exchange for, old ones. To take a typical example, the army becomes in certain forms of military dictatorship an ideological-organizational apparatus functioning above all as a political party of the bourgeoisie. Moreover, we need hardly mention the persistently ideological role of a whole series of repressive apparatuses (the courts, prison, the police) – a role so pronounced that classification

based on the extremely vague criterion ‘mainly’ (mainly repressive or mainly ideological) seems to fade away.

In summary, then, the space of the State may be divided between repressive and ideological apparatuses only at a purely descriptive level and with several important reservations. Such a demarcation does have the merit of extending the state sphere to include certain apparatuses of hegemony that are often considered ‘private’, and of laying stress on the State’s ideological activity. It nevertheless entails a conception of the State and of its activity that remains restrictive.

⁷ A point well made by Perry Anderson in ‘The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci’, *New Left Review*, No. 100, November 1976–January 1977.

⁸ See Louis Althusser, ‘Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses’, in *Lenin and Philosophy*, NLB 1971.

⁹ Such conceptions may be found in some contributions to the collective work, *Eléments pour une analyse du fascisme*, ed. M. A. Macciocchi, Paris 1976.

State, Powers and Struggles

As we have seen, the State plays a decisive role in the relations of production and the class struggle, entering into their constitution and, hence, their reproduction.

Now, one characteristic of Marxism's theoretical history (especially within the Third International) was its neglect of the specificity and altogether essential role of the State's political space – a neglect that was expressed in the view of the superstructure as a mere appendage of the base. Current criticisms of Marxism, however, refer to its supposed 'statism'. As long as Marxism neglected the State, it was guilty of economism; and when it speaks of the State, it can only have fallen into statism. Such criticisms are directed not merely at Stalinist political practice and the socio-political reality of the regimes in the East, but at Marxist theory itself. But although the State plays the essential role I have described, power is not, for Marxism, identifiable with or reducible to the State.

Taking into account the primacy (within the production process) of the relations of production over the productive forces, we are led to the conclusion that the relations of production and their components – possession and economic property – find expression in powers emanating from the sites that those relations delineate. As it turns out, these are class powers which all come down to the fundamental relations of exploitation: economic property denotes, among other things, the capacity (or power) to allocate the means of

production for given ends, and to dispose of the products thereby obtained; while possession refers to the capacity (or power) to bring the means of production into play and master the labour process. These powers are themselves located in a network of relations between exploiters and exploited involving those clashes between different class practices that make up the class struggle: in short, they are inserted in a system of inter-class *relations*. It is precisely by considering the economic process and the relations of production as a power network that we can grasp the fact that these relations of production are bound up, as constitutive powers, with the political and ideological relations which consecrate and legitimize them and which are present in these economic relations.

The following points are clear, then:

1. It is not true, as Foucault or Deleuze would have it, that relations of power are, for Marxism, 'in a position of exteriority vis-à-vis other types of relation: namely, economic processes ...'¹⁰ The economic process is class struggle, is therefore relations of power – and not just economic power. (It is understood that these powers are specific through being attached to exploitation – a phenomenon rarely mentioned by Foucault and Deleuze.) In the case of classes, power comes down to objective positions rooted in the division of labour: it designates the capacity of each class to realize its specific interests in a relation of opposition to that capacity in other classes. It is therefore impossible for power to escape economic relations. Rooted in the production of surplus-value and in their relation to the politico-ideological powers, these power relations are furthermore concretized in specific institutions-apparatuses: the companies, factories or production units that are the site of the extraction of surplus-value and of the exercise of these powers.

2. Power is not at all reduced to, or identified with, the State – contrary to the assertions of Foucault and Deleuze that, for

Marxism, 'power is state power: it is itself localized in a state apparatus [or] ... identified with the State.'¹¹ No, as with the social division of labour and the class struggle, relations of power *go far beyond the State*.

They go beyond it even if we abandon the narrow, juridical definition of the State that surprisingly remains present in Foucault or Deleuze. All the apparatuses of hegemony, including those that are legally private (ideological and cultural apparatuses, the Church, etc.), all these form part of the State; whereas, for Foucault and Deleuze, the State is always limited to the public kernel of army, police, prisons, courts, and so on. This allows them to say that power also exists outside the State as they conceive it. But in fact, a number of sites of power which they imagine to lie wholly outside the State (the apparatus of asylums and hospitals, the sports apparatus, etc.) are all the more sites of power in that they are included in the strategic field of the State.

I said *are all the more* and not *are constituted as*, because power goes far beyond the State, even broadly understood. This is true in a number of senses.

First of all, powers relating to the social classes and the class struggle are not reducible to the State. This is the case especially of powers in the relations of production, despite their intersection at several points with political power and despite the fact that they do not stand in an external relationship to the State. Now, it is true that the present-day capitalist State, which must at any event be broadly conceived, concentrates the various forms of power to an ever-increasing extent. Intervening more and more in every sphere of social reality, dissolving thereby the traditionally 'private' texture, the State spreads out into the tiniest vein and – what here concerns us most – tends to circumscribe power sectors and every class power. We can observe this in a phenomenon stemming from the current form of the separation of intellectual and manual labour – namely, the close relationship between the State and a form of knowledge that has been directly established as state discourse and hence become a technique of politics. We can see it too in the state penetration of the spheres of so-called collective consumption

(transport, housing, health, national assistance, leisure) – areas in which the ideological-symbolic powers materialized in such constructions as municipal flats or cultural centres directly expand state relations. In each of these rather different examples, the relations between class powers and the State are becoming closer and closer. All the same, class powers – and not just economic ones – still stretch beyond the State. For instance, even if we take into account its ideological apparatuses, the State's discourse does not exhaust all political discourse; and yet it includes a class power in its structure. Similarly, ideological power is never exhausted by the State and its ideological apparatuses. For just as they do not create the dominant ideology, they are not the only, or even the primary, factors in the reproduction of the relations of ideological domination/subordination. The ideological apparatuses simply elaborate and inculcate the dominant ideology: as Max Weber already pointed out, it is not the Church that creates and perpetuates religion, but religion that creates and perpetuates the Church. In short, ideological relations always have roots which go beyond the state apparatuses and which always consist in relations of power.

At this point, we should recall a further proposition. If class powers are not reducible to the State and always outmeasure its apparatuses, this is because, being rooted in the social division of labour and in exploitation, these powers have primacy over the apparatuses that embody them, most notably the State. This is but another form of the proposition according to which, in the complex relation between class struggle and the various apparatuses, *struggles play the primary and fundamental role*: even at the level of exploitation and the relations of production, these economic, political and ideological struggles occupy the very field of the relations of power.

But does this mean that the State has only a secondary and insignificant role in the material existence of power? Must we, in order to escape the imagery of a totalizing State, fall back into the illusion that the State is a mere appendage of the social? By no means. The State plays a constitutive role in the existence and

reproduction of class powers, and more generally in the class struggle itself – a fact which refers us back to its presence in the relations of production. Now, this constitutive role should be understood in the strong sense of the term: it implies that we also distinguish ourselves from an entire contemporary current which, by insisting on the primacy of ‘the social’ (in the extremely vague sense in which ‘society’ is supposed to be a principle ‘instituting’ the State), arrives precisely at the image of the State as an appendage of the social. In its most recent form, this current is known above all in France through the analyses made over the last twenty years by the authors of the fifties review *Socialisme ou Barbarie* (Lefort, Castoriadis, et al.). By the charge of statism which they direct at Marxism, they exhibit the same errors as those of instrumentalist Marxism itself:¹² that is to say, they exhibit a conception of the State as a mere appendage of struggles and power. The importance of this current lies not so much in its actual analyses as in the way in which they are coupled with the libertarian tradition of the French workers’ movement – most notably in the CFDT and the *Assises du socialisme* tendency in the Socialist Party.¹³ This link-up with the self-management current is to a great extent the result of a misunderstanding: for what is involved is an attempt to ground a self-management policy, whose stress on the need for direct, rank-and-file democracy is largely justified, on a theory that neglects the real role of the State. At best, the wish is taken for reality, and an anti-State policy is deduced from a vision according to which the State is more or less disappearing as a phenomenon with a distinct role. In reality, however, it is the terrifyingly palpable role of the State which necessitates a transition to socialism largely based on direct, rank-and-file democracy; and that requires exact knowledge of the State and of its current role. The need for such knowledge is all the greater in that a certain tradition of Jacobin-statist socialism also starts out from a conception of the State as a mere appendage of the social and of social classes – only, for that tradition, unlimited strengthening of the State cannot have damaging consequences provided that it is a workers’ State functioning as an appendage of the working class.

Now, in order to circumscribe exactly the State's constitutive role in the relations of production and the class struggle, and hence in the relations of power, we must once and for all distinguish this question, in its theoretical context, from the question of chronological origin and genesis (which came first, the chicken or the egg, the State or class struggle and the relations of production?); we must break from the positivist-empiricist, and indeed historicist, current which also exists within Marxism. *In the order of theoretical explanation*, it makes no sense whatever to speak of a social field of class division of labour and class power existing *prior* to the State; to speak, that is, of a chronologically and genealogically primordial layer which *subsequently* engenders a State intervening *post festum*. Wherever there is class division and thus class struggle and power, the State already exists as institutionalized political Power. Thus, there is no 'state of nature' or 'state of society' prior to the State, such as is imagined by a whole tradition that bears the clear impression of the Enlightenment political philosophy of the social contract. Right from the beginning, the State marks out the field of struggles, including that of the relations of production: it organizes the market and property relations; it institutes political domination and establishes the politically dominant class; and it stamps and codifies all forms of the social division of labour—all social reality – within the framework of a class-divided society.

It is in this precise sense that we cannot imagine any social phenomenon (any knowledge, power, language or writing) as posed in a state prior to the State: for all social reality must stand in relation to the State and to class divisions. This is not to say that no social reality has ever existed in the absence of, or chronologically prior to, the State and class division, but that within the frame of reference of a class-divided society with a State, such a reality cannot be imagined if abstraction is made of the State. Even if we admit that there actually was a social reality before the emergence of the State, once the latter is posited, every social reality must be conceived as maintaining constitutive relations with it.

Thus, if (a particular) history is (the) history of class struggle, and if 'primitive' societies without a State are societies without such

history, this is also because the latter does not exist without a State. There can be no history of struggles in which the State appears at a certain moment as the result and the fruit: such history is inconceivable without the State. It is not at all that the emergence of the State ushered in an irrecoverable time (History) in which there will be a State as long as there are Men. But, as Marx said, the end of class division spells the end of the State, and thus the end not of all Time but of that time or history which he called the prehistory of mankind.

Class division and class struggle cannot therefore be conceived as the *origin* of the State, in the sense of a genetic principle. But does this cast doubt on the basic proposition that the State is *grounded* on social struggles? Does it, in other words, question the determining role of the relations of production, and more generally the primacy of struggle and power relations over the State? In short, is it statism to pose the question of the State in this way?

I pose the question in this light in order to disentangle the skein of present-day analyses. For while these resemble one another in challenging the thesis that the State and power are grounded on the class struggle, they also exhibit a number of important differences. Thus, I shall reserve until later consideration of the relevant aspects of Foucault's problematic – one which essentially consists in referring the relationship between State and relations of production, between economic powers and political powers, to a 'diagram' of Power common to the various powers existing at a given point in time. At least this conception does not venture into a general theory of power since the dawn of time, and at least it does not see in the State the foundation of all social reality.

In fact, this is precisely what is done by the whole current of 'new philosophy', whose hollow and pretentious metaphysics of Power and the State – from Lévy to Glucksmann – merges with an old institutionalist tradition: namely, that which regards the State as the founding and instituting principle of every social relation, the *a priori* form of every conceivable social reality. Theirs is a truly primordial State of which social struggles are only the mirror-image and through which they come into existence. It is not Marxism but

this conception itself which reduces all power to the State, seeing in it the consequence of that original reality, the Power-State. Here everything is always a replica of the Master, the State and the Law (the debt to Lacan's version of psychoanalysis is evident); for there can be no struggles and no social reality of any kind – be it power, language, knowledge, speech, writing or desire – except *through* the Power-State. It is a *radical* evil which no struggle can extirpate, struggle itself being the mere double of the Prince – that is to say, of a phenomenon constituted in the original web of a Power-State whose eternal character rests on a metaphysical universality and necessity. This Power-State is therefore the foundation-origin of everything: the foundation because the origin, and vice versa. State totalitarianism is both primeval and eternal since the State is the subject of all possible History: instead of Kant, it is with Hegel that we find ourselves once again.

The State, then, is everything – to which the other current I mentioned answers with the symmetrically opposite conception that the social is everything and the State just its instituted appendage. The weights of the terms State and society are thereby changed, but the problematic remains one of a mechanical and linear causality grounded on a simplistic monist principle and superimposed on a first metaphysics.

At this point we should recall certain analyses that a number of us have been making for a long time. The determining role of the relations of production, or the primacy of class struggle over the State and its apparatuses, cannot be grasped according to a mechanical causality – one, moreover, which shifts over into a linear, chronological causality that we called *historicism*. But this determination and primacy do not necessarily refer to an existence historically prior to that of the State: whether such was the case or not is, if I may say so, another matter. This is true above all of the relationship between the State and the relations of production within a given mode of production, and of the transition from one mode of production to another. Marx already established this with perfect clarity when he distinguished between 'presupposition' or logical priority and historical-chronological precedence as two

modes in which given relations of production may come before a particular State. In fact, determination of the State by the relations of production, or the primacy of struggles over the State, is inscribed in diverse temporalities and in historical forms marked by uneven development. Thus, in the order of historical genesis, a form of State may precede the relations of production to which it corresponds. Examples of this abound in Marx's work, and I have myself shown that the Absolutist State in Europe was predominantly capitalist while the relations of production still bore a feudal stamp.

Such examples tell us much of the relationship between a given State and the prevailing relations of production and class struggles. But they have a more general bearing, since they relate to the origins of the State. As we have seen, the question of the historical origins of the State – the historico-genetic order of succession of, on the one hand, the State and, on the other, the relations of production and class powers – is not theoretically homogeneous with the question of the State's foundation in the relations of production, class struggles, and the relations of power.

However, a number of misconceptions are due to Engels himself. A tributary in this respect of the historicist notion of linear causality, Engels essentially tried to provide a foundation for the primacy of class struggle and division over the State by superimposing this question on that of the genesis of the State. In this way, he gave in to the myth of origins. One aim of *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State* is to demonstrate that class division in the relations of production first appeared in the so-called primitive societies, only later giving birth to the State. But even granting the correctness of Engels's historical investigation, this does not, as he imagined, constitute a proof that the State is determined by, and grounded on, the relations of production; or rather, it would be a proof only if Marxism were a fully-integrated historicism.

Now, it is equally clear that a reverse historical sequence would furnish no proof of the opposite thesis – again unless we ourselves share the historicist problematic. I am especially thinking here of the work of Pierre Clastres, who argues that the passage from societies without a State to those with a State unfolded through the

emergence of political power before class division in the relations of production; and who draws the conclusion (after many others) that the State played a fundamental and determining role with regard to such division. This argument is supposed to provide an overwhelming criticism of Marxism: ‘So it is clearly the political break which is decisive, and not economic changes ... And if one wishes to retain the Marxist concepts of infrastructure and superstructure, perhaps it should be admitted that the political is the infrastructure, while the economic is the superstructure ...’ And further: ‘The political relation of power precedes and grounds the economic relation of exploitation. Before being economic, alienation is political: power comes before labour; the economic is a derivation from the political; and the emergence of the State determines the appearance of classes.’¹⁴ A striking example, if ever there was one, of historical reasoning according to linear causality! Moreover, in this case, it forms part of exactly the same problematic as that of Engels. Supposing that Clastres’s analyses are historically accurate – and I will take care not to make an assessment of my own – they are not at all in contradiction with Marxism, since the State’s ‘foundation’ in the relations of production and in class division does not imply that these are necessarily the ‘origin’ of the State. Such analyses do not therefore call into question the determining role of the relations of production and the primacy of struggles over the State: they would constitute a refutation only for the positivist-empiricist, and even historicist, problematic which confuses *origin* and *foundation*. To take just one more example, Lévy falls into this problematic when he invokes Clastres’s analyses in support of the thesis that the State is the eternal foundation, because the origin, of everything.¹⁵

Not only do class struggles have primacy over, and stretch far beyond, the State, but the relations of power also outmeasure the State in another sense: *relations of power do not exhaust class relations* and may go a certain way beyond them. Of course, they will still have class pertinency, continuing to be located, and to have a stake, in the terrain of political domination. But they do not rest on the same foundation as the social class division of labour, and are

neither a mere consequence nor homologues or isomorphs of that division; this is so most notably in the case of relations between men and women. We now know that class division is not the exclusive terrain of the constitution of power, even though in class societies all power bears a class significance. The consequence is well known: radical transformation of the state apparatus in the transition to socialism is not enough for the totality of power relations to be abolished or transformed.

Now, although these power relations stretch beyond class relations, the State cannot keep aloof from them any more than they can be materialized and reproduced without specific apparatuses and institutions (the couple, the family). Through its activity and effects, the State intervenes in all the relations of power in order to assign them a class pertinency and enmesh them in the web of class powers. The State thereby takes over heterogeneous powers which relay and recharge the economic, political and ideological powers of the dominant class. The power exhibited in sexual relations between men and women, which is certainly dissimilar to that of class relations, is nevertheless invested in the latter and is mediated and reproduced as a class relation by the State and the company or factory: class power therefore traverses, utilizes and gears down that other power, assigning to it a given political significance. The State is a class State not only insofar as it concentrates power based on class relations, but also in the sense in which it *tends* to spread through every power by appropriating its specific mechanisms (even though that power is never co-extensive with the State).

However important these points of clarification may be, it is still true that Marxism advances the following propositions:

- (a) Class power is the cornerstone of power in class-divided social formations, whose motive force is the class struggle;
- (b) Although grounded on economic power and the relations of production, political power is primordial in that changes in its character condition every essential transformation in the other fields of power (even if they are not themselves a sufficient condition);

- (c) In the capitalist mode of production, political power occupies a field and a place that are distinct from the other fields of power, however much they may intersect one another;
- (d) This power is pre-eminently concentrated and materialized by the State, which is thus the central site of the exercise of power.

Foucault and Deleuze, in particular, reject this set of propositions in favour of a vision which dilutes and scatters power among innumerable microsituations; they thereby seriously underestimate the importance of classes and the class struggle and ignore the central role of the State. I intend to say no more about them for the moment. But they here meet up with an old tradition of Anglo-Saxon sociology and political science, running from functionalism to institutionalism, from Parsons to Merton, Dahl, Lasswell and Etzioni – a tradition in which the centre of analysis is shifted from the State towards the ‘pluralism of micropowers’. Despite the fact that they explicitly developed all the characteristic points of the above vision, these writers remain relatively unknown in France, where political thought has always focussed on the (juridical) State. Indeed, it is this very unfamiliarity, linked with the well-known provincialism of the French intellectual arena, which allows these most hackneyed of ideas to be presented as something new. Foucault’s indisputable merits are therefore to be found in another region. What is truly remarkable is the fact that such discourse, which tends to blot out power by dispersing it among tiny molecular vessels, is enjoying great success at a time when the expansion and weight of the State are assuming proportions never seen before.

To sum up, all power (and not just class power) can exist only insofar as it is materialized in certain apparatuses (and not just state apparatuses). These apparatuses are no mere appendages of power, but play a role in its constitution: the State itself is organically present in the generation of class powers. But in the relationship between power and apparatuses, and more especially between class struggle and apparatuses, the fundamental role is played by the (class) struggle, whose field is none other than that of the relations

of power, economic exploitation, and political-ideological domination and subordination. Struggles always have primacy over, and constantly go beyond, the apparatuses or institutions.

Thus, contrary to seemingly libertarian, or indeed other, conceptions that feed off illusions, the State plays a constitutive role not only in the relations of production and the powers which they realize, but also in the totality of power relations at every level of society. Contrary to all statist conceptions, however – ranging from the burningly topical ones back to Max Weber and his vision of apparatuses/institutions as the original site and primary field of the constitution of power relations – it is struggles which make up the primary field of power relations and which invariably have primacy over the State. This is true not simply of economic struggles, but of the totality of struggles, political and ideological included. To be sure, the relations of production still play the determining role. But the primacy of struggles over the State goes beyond the sphere of the relations of production, since there can here be no question of an economic structure that founds struggles in its turn: quite simply, these relations of production are already relations of struggle and power. Now, this determining role is the essential and most general factor in *the very existence of struggles* and in the primacy of the totality of struggles over the State. To reject this as the foundation of struggle is to reject not only the determining role of the economic but the primacy of any kind of struggle over the State. Although it may seem that the tyranny of the economic would thereby be discarded, one is inevitably left with the devouring omnipotence of the Power-State.

Thus, of the false objections made against Marx's thought, surely none is more ignorant and blind than the charge of statism – even when it springs from anti-statist political intentions of a perfect legitimacy, and even if it is based on the undeniably totalitarian aspects of the State in the countries of so-called real socialism. Nowhere else is this criticism of Marx presented with such bad faith as among the 'new' philosophers, most notably Glucksmann. Rather than deal with them myself, I shall hand over to Rancière – a writer who is, in other respects, far from gentle with Marx's thought:

‘Glucksmann’s arguments are more radical when he has to prove, against all evidence, that Marx lays stress on the State as the opposite of private society. In fact, it is the impossibility of providing the slightest proof that provides him with the ultimate proof. *Although a Chapter on the State had been envisaged*, writes Glucksmann, *it is, as if by chance, missing from Capital*. Well-known Stalinist logic: the best proof of people’s guilt is the lack of all proof. For if there is no proof, it must be because they have hidden it; and if they have hidden it, then they must be guilty.’¹⁶

¹⁰ Deleuze in his article on Foucault, ‘Ecrivain non: un nouveau cartographe’, *Critique*, Paris, December 1975. See also Michel Foucault, *La volonté de savoir*, Paris 1977.

¹¹ Foucault, *ibid.*, 1977, p. 123.

¹² See Claude Lefort, ‘Maintenant’, in *Libre*, No. 1, 1977; C. Castoriadis, *L’institution imaginaire de la société*, Paris 1975. This current comes very close to the ‘anti-institutionalist’ tendency of G. Lapassade and R. Loureau.

¹³ I am referring especially to the journal *Faire*.

¹⁴ P. Clastres, *Les sociétés contre l’Etat*, Paris 1974, pp. 169, 172ff.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 74ff.

¹⁶ See the article by Jacques Rancière in *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 25–31 July 1977.

Part One

The Institutional Materiality of the State

We can now return to our initial problem: the institutional materiality of the State regarded as a 'special' apparatus cannot be reduced to its role in political domination. It must, first of all, be sought in the relationship of the State to the relations of production and to the social division of labour which they entail. But this relationship is not of an order epistemologically different from that of the State's relationship to social classes and the class struggle. Placing the State in relationship with the relations of production and the social division of labour is but the first, albeit a distinct, moment of a single endeavour: namely that of situating the State vis-à-vis the field of struggle as a whole. I shall now attempt to demonstrate this insofar as it concerns the capitalist State, without however exhaustively taking up analyses made in my previous books. I shall content myself with deepening and rounding off a number of points (and correcting certain others) in the light of analyses that we are now in a position to make.

The question I tried to answer in *Political Power and Social Classes* was the following: why, in order to assert its political domination, does the bourgeoisie dispose of the quite specific state apparatus that is the capitalist State – the modern representative State, the national-popular class State? From where does this State's original material framework derive? My analyses already went in the direction of saying that this materiality results from the relative separation of the State and the relations of production under capitalism. This separation constitutes the organizing principle of the peculiar institutions of the capitalist State and of its diverse apparatuses (courts, army, administration, police, and so on), of its

centralism, bureaucracy and representative institutions (universal suffrage, parliament, etc.) and of its juridical system; its foundation lies in the specificity of the relations of production and of the social division of labour which they entail: that is to say, in the relationship of possession whereby the direct producer is radically separated from his means and object of labour within the labour process itself.

At the time, I was struck by a characteristic feature of the Marxist theory of the State, one which persists today and which springs from deep ambiguities in Marx's own thinking on the subject. Of those Marxist authors who did not reduce the capitalist State to political domination (to the 'dictatorship' of a subject: the bourgeoisie) and who therefore raised the pertinent question: 'Why is it this State and no other that corresponds to bourgeois political domination?' – of these, the overwhelming majority sought to locate the basis of the capitalist State *in the domain of the circulation of capital and 'generalized' commodity exchange*. We know well enough the general components of such analyses: exchange between 'private' commodity-owners (private property here being apprehended purely at the juridical level), contractual buying and selling of labour-power, equivalent exchange and abstract exchange-value, and so on. This was supposed to be the ground on which emerged the 'formal' and 'abstract' equality and freedom of the isolated particles of market society – generic individuals installed as legal-political 'persons-individuals' – as well as formal and abstract law and juridical rules serving as the system which binds together the exchangers of commodities. The relative separation of State and economy was understood as separation of the State and the famous 'civil society'. The site of the needs and exchange-acts of isolated individuals, this civil society was supposed to have represented itself as a contractual association of individualized legal subjects – one in which the separation of civil society and State was reduced to an ideological mechanism lodged at the heart of commodity relations, and to a fetishization or reification of the State derived from the celebrated fetishism of commodities. Although it has numerous variants, this conception always exhibits an identical framework. It

was expounded principally by the Italian Marxist school (Galvano della Volpe, Cerroni and others), but it is still extraordinarily full of life. Here I will simply mention Henri Lefebvre's very recent work on the State, which is closer than others to my positions.¹

I tried to show that this conception is inadequate and partially false, since it seeks to locate the basis of the State in the relations of circulation and commodity-exchange (which is in some ways a pre-Marxist position) rather than in the relations of production which have a determining place in the total cycle of expanded reproduction of capital. To a considerable extent, this conception actually impoverished research on the State. Moreover, while it poses the question of the institutional specificity of the capitalist State, it makes impossible any articulation of this State-civil society with the State-class struggle: social classes themselves are grounded on the relations of production. It is not that this conception does not grasp a number of important institutional mechanisms of the State, for the space of the circulation of capital has its own effect on the State. But it misses what is essential. Nor does it allow us to take into account those characteristics of the State in the East that resemble features of the capitalist State: after all, commodity relations have undergone notable transformations in those countries. As a matter of fact, this family resemblance derives from, among other things, the 'capitalist aspects' that mark both the State and the relations of production and social division of labour in the East. The workers exercise neither control and mastery over the labour processes (relation of possession) nor real economic power over the means of labour (economic property relation, as distinct from legal property): what has taken place there is a statization, and not a genuine socialization, of production. At the political level, there is a dictatorship *over* the proletariat.

Since that time, discussion and research on the State and power have advanced so much in France and abroad that the ideological-theoretical conjuncture has partially changed. A number of recent analyses, however, seem to be reproducing the drawbacks and deficiencies of the ones I attacked in my earlier work. My own analyses have often been criticized for their *politicism*: in seeking to

map out, ‘purely’ on the basis of the relations of production, that political space which is peculiar to the capitalist State and capitalist power, I am supposed to have paid insufficient attention to the relations between State and economy.

According to this line of argument, the problem is one of placing the State in relation to what some call *the logic of capital* – that is, to its accumulation and expanded reproduction. (This problematic has been developed particularly in West Germany under the name of *Ableitung*, and in Great Britain and the United States under that of Derivation.) Involved here is an attempt to ‘derive’, or let us say deduce, the particular institutions of the capitalist State from the ‘economic categories’ of capital accumulation. Now, this problematic relapses into a fairly traditional conception of capital as an abstract entity with an intrinsic logic – the economic categories – thereby issuing in two lines of research that are equally incapable of accounting for the material specificity of this State. Either, as Hirsch has shown, it falls right back into the space of exchange and circulation of capital (equivalent exchange, abstract value, money, etc.) and deduces the specificity of the capitalist State from these ‘categories’;² or else it tries to deduce the specificity and historical transformations of this State *from its economic functions in promoting the expanded reproduction of capital*. This latter tendency may also be found in France, where it takes the form, especially in relation to the present-day State, of deducing the totality of institutional changes from the State’s new role in the overaccumulation-devalorization of capital.

Here too, this line of research misses the essential point. No doubt in concentrating my attack against economism, I did bend the stick in the other direction. Economic functions favouring the accumulation of capital affect the structuring of the State in a number of important ways that vary according to whether it is a question of primitive accumulation, competitive capitalism, or present-day monopoly capitalism. I shall explain the character of these functions more precisely in Part Three, where I show that they are essential to an explanation of the current form of State: authoritarian statism. For the time being, I will simply say that they

are not the primary functions, and that they do not allow us to give an exhaustive explanation of political institutions. They do not answer the basic question: why are these functions fulfilled precisely by the quite peculiar apparatus that is the modern, national-popular, representative State? Why, for example, has this State not reproduced itself in the form of Absolutist monarchy?

Just as we cannot answer this question merely by referring to political domination (to the nature of the bourgeoisie or to the political struggle between the bourgeoisie and the working class), so we cannot answer by referring to the State's economic functions or to a combination of the two (economic functions + political struggle). More precisely, these economic functions are articulated and grounded in the specifically capitalist relations of production. In fact, these relations constitute the initial scaffolding of the State's institutional materiality and of the relative separation from the economy that stamps its framework as an apparatus; they are the only possible *starting-point* for analysis of the State's relationship with classes and the class struggle. Changes in the State themselves refer above all to the struggles of social classes. These constitute the framework of modifications in the role and economic activities of the State, each of which has particular effects upon the State.

I was already following this line of research in *Political Power and Social Classes*; but I must now point out the limitations of that text, which I wrote before May 1968. (It was actually published during the May events.) While it stressed the role of the social (capitalist) division of labour insofar as it started from the relations of production, it did not grasp the full extent of that division. It was May itself and the resulting peculiarities of the workers movement that blew away a whole series of obstacles. In *Social Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*³ I drew the lessons concerning the importance of the social division of labour in the constitution of classes. Here I shall try to do the same for the State, bringing in certain typical cases as *examples*. In this way, we shall be led on to an examination of fundamental theoretical questions. Locating the perspective and axis of research in the division of labour will clearly

pose fresh problems, since it is not as easy as many have thought to establish the relation between this division and the State.

¹ E. Pashukanis, *Law and Marxism: a General Theory*, London 1978; Galvano Della Volpe, *Rousseau e Marx*, Rome 1964; U. Cerroni, *Marx e il diritto moderno*, 1963; Henri Lefebvre, *De l'Etat*, Paris 1976 and subsequent years. Of course, I do not wish to underestimate the value of Lefebvre's work: his last book, in particular, contains some remarkable analyses. This line of research is also adopted in the works of J. Baudrillard.

² See J. Hirsch, *Staatsapparat und Reproduktion des Kapitals*, 1974, and his contribution to the collective work, *La crise de l'Etat* (ed. Poulantzas) Paris 1976. The *Ableitung* problematic has been popular for quite a long time in West Germany, and some of its exponents may be found in the collective work *L'Etat contemporain et le marxisme* (ed. J.-M. Vincent), Paris 1975. It has appeared more recently in Great Britain and the United States: see a number of articles in the journals *Kapitalistate*, *Insurgent Sociologist* (USA), *Capital and Class* (Great Britain), and the recent work of Holloway, Piccioto, Hindess, Hirst and others. Lastly, I should mention that my work has been criticized for its 'politicism' above all by the writers grouped around the journal *Economie politique*.

³ NLB 1975.

Intellectual Labour and Manual Labour: Knowledge and Power

Let us begin by considering the creation and functioning of the bourgeois State from the point of view of its materiality as an apparatus. It is, in fact, a specialized and centralized apparatus of a peculiarly political nature, comprising an assemblage of impersonal, anonymous functions whose form is distinct from that of economic power; their ordering rests on the axiomatic force of laws-rules distributing the spheres of activity or competence, and on a legitimacy derived from the people-nation. In the modern State, all these elements are incorporated in the organization of its apparatuses. By contrast, feudal state apparatuses are based on personal ties; on the modelling of all power after economic power (the lord here playing the roles of judge, administrator and army commander in his capacity as landowner); and on a hierarchy of watertight powers (the aristocratic pyramid) whose legitimacy derives from the sovereignty of the person of its head (the lord-king) inscribed in the body of society. The specificity of the modern State therefore refers precisely to the relative separation of the political from the economic, and to the entire reorganization of its respective spaces and fields implied by the total dispossession of the direct producer in capitalist relations of production.

These relations are the ground of a *prodigious reorganization of the social division of labour*: indeed, they are themselves consubstantial with this reorganization, which puts its stamp on the production of

relative surplus-value and on the expanded reproduction of capital in the stage of 'machine production' and 'large-scale industry'. Once it is understood that the specifically capitalist division of labour represents, through all its forms, the precondition of the modern State, then the latter appears in all its historical originality as an effective break with pre-capitalist types of State (Asiatic, slave and feudal). This point cannot be fully grasped by conceptions which ground the modern State on commodity relations, since these have always existed.

Here I shall examine but one case: the division between manual and intellectual labour. In reality, this should not at all be conceived as an empirical or natural split between those who work with their hands and those who work with their head: instead, it directly refers to the political-ideological relations prevailing within particular relations of production. Now, as Marx clearly showed, this division assumes a specific form under capitalism, where the direct producer is totally dispossessed of his means of labour. This results in the following:⁴ (a) the characteristic separation of intellectual elements from the labour performed by the direct producer, which, through differentiation from intellectual labour (knowledge), becomes the capitalist form of manual labour; (b) the separation of science from manual labour at a time when the former enters 'the service of capital' and tends to become a directly productive force; (c) the development of specific relations between science-knowledge and the dominant ideology – not in the sense that knowledge is more highly 'ideologized' than before, nor simply that the existing power utilizes knowledge for political-ideological ends (that has always been the case), but in the sense that power is ideologically legitimized in the modality of scientific technique, as if it flowed automatically from a rational scientific practice; and (d) the establishment of organic relations between, on the one hand, intellectual labour thus dissected from manual labour and, on the other hand, the political relations of domination: in short, between capitalist *knowledge* and capitalist *power*. Of course, Marx was already familiar with this phenomenon. When discussing factory despotism and the role of science in the capitalist production

process, he analysed the organic relations between knowledge and power, between intellectual labour (or knowledge-science invested in ideology) and the political relations of domination such as they exist and are reproduced in the very process of extraction of surplus-value.

Although this quite typically capitalist separation of manual and intellectual labour is only one aspect of a more general social division of labour, it is nevertheless of decisive importance in the case of the State. One of the fundamental insights of the Marxist classics is the understanding that, as regards the State's emergence as a 'special' apparatus, unquestionably the most important aspect of the social division of labour is the division between manual and intellectual labour. *In all its apparatuses* (that is, not only in its ideological apparatuses but also in the repressive and economic ones) *the State incarnates intellectual labour as separated from manual labour*: this becomes evident provided that the two are not conceived according to a naturalist-positivist distinction. And it is within the capitalist State that the organic relationship between intellectual labour and political domination, knowledge and power, is realized in the most consummate manner. Separated from the relations of production, the State takes up position alongside an intellectual labour that has itself been divorced from manual labour: it is the corollary and the product of this division, and at the same time plays a specific role in its constitution and reproduction.

This finds expression in the very materiality of the State – and, above all, in that specialization-separation of the state apparatuses vis-à-vis the production process which principally occurs through the crystallization of intellectual labour. In their capitalist forms of army, law-courts, administration and police (not to mention the ideological apparatuses) these state apparatuses involve the practical supremacy of a knowledge and discourse – whether directly invested in the dominant ideology or erected on the basis of the dominant ideological formations – from which the popular masses are excluded. The framework of these apparatuses rests on a specific and permanent exclusion of the popular masses, who are subjected to manual labour through the instrumentality of the State.

For the discourse of this Scientist-State, of its apparatuses and agents, enjoys a permanent monopoly of knowledge, which also determines the functions of state organization and leadership. In fact, these functions are centralized through their specific separation from the masses: in this way, intellectual labour (knowledge-power) is materialized in state apparatuses, while at the other pole, manual labour tends to be concentrated in the popular masses, who are separated and excluded from these organizational functions. It is equally clear that a number of institutions of so-called indirect, representative democracy (political parties, parliament, etc.), in which the relationship between State and masses is expressed, themselves depend on the same mechanism. Gramsci had a presentiment of this when he saw in the general organizational role of the capitalist State the supreme realization of intellectual labour separated in characteristic fashion from manual labour. Thus, he included agents of the state apparatuses, including the policemen and soldiers of the repressive apparatuses in the broadly-defined category of (organic and traditional) *intellectuals*.⁵

The relationship between knowledge and power does not concern only ideology and does not refer merely to the function of legitimizing the State which it ensures especially in the realm of official political thinking. Even during the transition from feudalism to capitalism, and later in the stage of competitive capitalism – both of which were marked by the constitution of the bourgeois State and by the dominance, within bourgeois ideology, of the juridical-political sphere – the conceptualizations of Machiavelli, Thomas More and later thinkers explicitly referred to the model of scientific technique and apodictic *episteme* in order to legitimate politics and law as the bearers of a form of knowledge opposed to what they termed utopia. Their argument pointed beyond official discourse to those *primary forms of ideology* secreted by the State that uphold relations within the apparatus (internal self-legitimation), as well as to the legitimation of its external practices, in which the State and its agents appear as bearers of a specific knowledge and an intrinsic rationality. Moreover, all these phenomena are today continually being strengthened in forms that are peculiar to the relationship

ideology-knowledge-science implicit in the transformation of juridical-political ideology into technocratic ideology.

But I repeat, this relationship between knowledge and power is not the province of ideological legitimation alone: the capitalist separation of intellectual and manual labour encompasses science itself. Of course the appropriation of capital by science takes place in the factory; but it is also effected through the State. Today, it is clear that the State tends to incorporate science itself by organizing its discourse. We are not talking here simply of the instrumental use of science and of its manipulation in the service of capital. The capitalist State regiments the production of science in such a way that it becomes, in its innermost texture, a *state science* locked into the mechanisms of power; and as we know, this is not just true of the so-called human sciences. More generally, this State structures intellectual labour through a whole series of circuits and networks thanks to which it has taken the place of the Church: it subordinates and marks down for itself the *intellectual-scientific corps*, which had no fixed shape in the Middle Ages. Intellectuals have been constituted as a specialized professional corps through their reduction to functionaries or mercenaries of the modern State. In the universities, institutes, academies and societies of learning, these bearers of knowledge-science have become state functionaries through the same mechanisms that made intellectuals of this State's functionaries.

If the relationship between knowledge and power is not the province of legitimation alone, this is also because it is crystallized by the quite specific discourse of the capitalist State itself. The pre-capitalist States knew a discourse of revelation which was founded on the (real or supposed) utterances of the Prince and which expressed anew the inscription of the sovereign person in the body of society. It was a mythical discourse in the strict sense of the term – one which tended to fill through narration the gap between the beginnings of sovereign power and the origins of the world. By contrast, the capitalist State does not base its legitimacy on its origins: it permits of repeated legitimations on the basis of the sovereignty of the people-nation. It thus plays a quite specific

organizational role vis-à-vis the dominant classes and a regulative role vis-à-vis the social formation as a whole. Its discourse is one of action – a discourse of strategy and tactics which is, to be sure, locked into the dominant ideology, but which also feeds off a state-monopolized science-knowledge (economic, political and historical knowledge).

Although this discourse is the supreme realization of the junction between knowledge and power, it has no inherent unity of its own. It is segmented and fragmented according to the strategic goals of the existing power and to the classes it seeks to address. (I have pointed out elsewhere that even in the supremely ‘totalitarian language’ of fascist discourse, one and the same formulation – the term corporatism, for example – undergoes twists and turns of meaning according to the goal and class for which it is designed.) The discourse must always be *heard* and *understood*, even if not in a uniform manner: it is not enough that it be uttered as an incantation. This presupposes that, in the various codes of thinking, the State itself is *overcoded*: that it serves as the frame of reference within which the various segments of reasoning and their supporting apparatuses find homogeneous ground for their differential functioning. Through a process of measured distillation, this overcoding is inculcated in the totality of subjects. Thus, the capitalist State instals a uniform *national language* and eliminates all other languages. This national language is necessary not only for the creation of a national economy and market, but still more for the exercise of the State’s political role. It is therefore the mission of the *national State* to organize the processes of thought by forging the materiality of the people-nation, and to create a language which, while doubtless situated within ideological formations, is by no means reducible to an ideological operation.

This relationship between knowledge and power, grounded as it is on intellectual labour which the State crystallizes by separating it from manual labour, is lodged in the *organizational framework* of the State. The State redraws and reproduces the social division of labour within its own being: it is thus the carbon-copy of the relations between power and knowledge such as they are reproduced within

intellectual labour itself. This process takes place in a range stretching from hierarchical, centralized and disciplinary relations to those concentrated in the various layers and nodal-points of decision making and execution; from the echelons within which authority is delegated through the obscuring forms of the allocation of knowledge (bureaucratic secrecy) to the modes of training and recruiting state agents. Down to the last detail, the framework of the capitalist State incarnates the capitalist division between intellectual and manual labour as it is reproduced and internalized within intellectual labour itself. This spreads through the entire material ritual of the State down to such a precise feature as *writing*. Of course, there has always been a close relationship between the State and writing, given that every State embodies a certain form of the division between intellectual and manual labour. But writing plays a quite specific role in the case of capitalism, representing, still more than the spoken word, the articulation and distribution of knowledge and power within the State. In a certain sense, nothing exists for the capitalist State unless it is written down – whether as a mere written mark, a note, a report, or a complete archive. In the pre-capitalist States, writing was simply a matter of transcribing the (real or supposed) utterances of the sovereign: it was a writing of revelation and commemoration. By contrast, the anonymous writing of the capitalist State does not repeat a discourse, but plots a certain path, recording the bureaucratic sites and mechanisms and representing the hierarchically centralized space of the State. It both locates and creates linear and reversible spacings in the consecutive and segmented chain of bureaucratization. The massive accumulation of paper in the modern state organization is not merely a picturesque detail but a material feature essential to its existence and functioning – the internal cement of its intellectuals-functionaries that embodies the relationship between State and intellectual labour. Unlike the pre-capitalist States or the Church, this State does not retain a monopoly of writing: it spreads it (in schools) in response to the highly concrete necessity of training labour-power. But it thereby *reduplicates* writing, the more so as the spoken word of the State must itself be heard and understood. In the

capitalist State, with its exoteric speech and unified national language, it is exactly as if secrecy and the crystallization of knowledge-power had passed into state writing, whose hermetic insulation from the popular masses is well known. It is this State which has systematized, if not invented, grammar and orthography by establishing them as networks of power.

Lastly, the knowledge-power relationship finds expression in particular techniques of the exercise of power – exact devices inscribed in the texture of the State whereby the popular masses are permanently kept at a distance from the centres of decision-making. These comprise a series of rituals and styles of speech, as well as structural modes of formulating and tackling problems that monopolize knowledge in such a way that the popular masses (here equivalent to manual labour) are effectively excluded.

Of course there can be no question of reducing the relationship between State and relations of production to the division of intellectual and manual labour. I have merely tried to illustrate the investigative orientation which allows us to discard the notion that the sphere of commodity relations forms the basis of the capitalist State. Thus, in the above case, I have referred to the bureaucracy as the centralizing instance made necessary by the anarchic competition of civil society. Here too, the State is not the mere result of the division between intellectual and manual labour rooted in the relations of production. It actively enters into the reproduction of that division at the very heart of the production process and in society as a whole – both through apparatuses specialized in the qualification and training of labour power (the school, the family, various occupational training structures) and through the totality of its apparatuses (bourgeois and petty-bourgeois political parties, the parliamentary system, cultural apparatuses, the press and media). It is present from the beginning in the constitution of that division within the relations of production, a division incarnated in factory despotism and referring to the political relations of domination and subordination such as they exist in the relations of exploitation, and thus also to the State's presence in the latter.

We can now see that, in some of its capitalist aspects, the State in the countries of so-called real socialism is also affected by this knowledge-power relationship, even though commodity relations have undergone considerable change. The division between intellectual and manual labour, grounded on 'capitalist aspects' of the relations of production that have survived statization of the economy (as distinct from genuine socialization), is there reproduced in new forms. However, I shall do no more than point this out, since for a number of reasons – among which are the particularities of social classes and the class struggle in those countries – the forms assumed by the problem are markedly different in the West.

This relationship between the State and the intellectual/manual division of labour implicit in capitalist relations of production is therefore only one stage in the process whereby the State is brought into relation with classes and the class struggle under capitalism. The character of this State, which represents the power of the bourgeoisie, derives from the peculiarities of the bourgeoisie's constitution as the dominant class. Being rooted in a terrain that implies a characteristic specialization of functions and of intellectual labour, this class is the first one in history to need a corps of *organic intellectuals* in order to establish itself as the dominant class. These state-enrolled intellectuals are formally distinct from the bourgeoisie, but play a role in organizing its hegemony (unlike the purely instrumental role of the priests in the case of the feudal system). It is no accident that the original form of the bourgeois revolution was, above all, that of ideological revolution; here we need only think of the role played in organizing the bourgeoisie by Enlightenment philosophy and the ideological-cultural apparatus of publishing and the press.

Furthermore, although the material texture is the same in every capitalist State and country, it varies according to the specificities of the class struggle, and of the organization of the bourgeoisie and intellectual corps. Nothing demonstrates this more clearly than the French experience. For in its path from the Absolutist State through the forms of the 1789 Revolution, the French bourgeoisie, more

than any other, achieved its original hegemony and forged the unity of the nation by establishing close links with a corps of licensed intellectuals. It made sure of their support by tightly integrating them in the institutional web of the Jacobin State and by knowing how to pay them in numerous ways for their services. This has left its mark not only in the cultural institutions and ideological apparatuses of the French State, but also in the striking peculiarities of the intelligentsia. Attached to the republican state institutions in whose networks the bourgeoisie delegates its power, the intelligentsia was, and still is, both opposed to fascist ideology and state forms and massively isolated from radical popular struggles, which threaten to challenge its own power. Indeed, it is continually torn between radical-republican anti-fascism and the Versaillais syndrome. Nowhere else are the phantasms of the intelligentsia incarnated to such a degree in the state apparatuses – whether its dream of being the adviser of Princes or, perhaps even at the same time, the popular-elitist temptation of influencing the masses from above, over the heads of their organizations and by means of the state apparatuses (press, cultural institutions, media). Corresponding to this thirst for power, which is sustained by the place allotted to intellectuals in the State, is the well-known – and, one is tempted to say, just – anti-intellectualism of the French workers movement and its organizations. In its turn, then, this anti-intellectualism also leaves its mark on the State and on the popular masses' characteristic distrust of its ideological apparatuses.

⁴ I repeat what I said in the Preface: I shall make no precise references to the classics of Marxism, except where I quote them explicitly. Such references may be found in my *Social Classes and Contemporary Capitalism*, op. cit.

⁵ Above all in *Gli intellettuali e l'organizzazione della Cultura*, 1966. The title essay is included in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, London 1971.

Individualization

I. The Framework of the State and of the Techniques of Power

The specialization and centralization of the capitalist State, its hierarchical-bureaucratic functioning and its elective institutions all involve the atomization of the body-politic into what are called 'individuals' – that is, juridical-political persons who are the subjects of certain freedoms. The State here presupposes a specific organization of the political space upon which the exercise of power comes to bear. The centralized, bureaucratized State *installs* this atomization and, as a representative State laying claim to national sovereignty and the popular will, it *represents* the unity of a body (people-nation) that is split into formally equivalent monads. In certain of its aspects, moreover, the materiality of the State and its apparatuses is here constituted as having to exercise a hold over a divided social body – one which is homogeneous in its division, uniform in the isolation of its elements, and continuous in its atomization. (We could draw up a long list, stretching from the modern army to the administration, the judicial system, prisons, schools, the media, and so on.)

Here too, these divisions do not first arise out of relations among commodity-owners: they do not spring from a civil society whose primal figures are individual subjects of contractual relations.

Although the mechanism of individualization is certainly present in generalized commodity exchange, its basis lies elsewhere. At this point, we must take care to avoid another, equally false conception, which, while leading to opposite results, shares the presuppositions of the one just mentioned. This second conception also locates the process of individualization exclusively in commodity relations, and not in the relations of production or class relations. However, it prides itself on grounding *the State* on these class relations. Thus, since individualization is held to be simply a mystifying appearance belonging to the realm of commodity fetishism, it can be of no relevance whatsoever in the organization of the capitalist State.

It is clear that individualization is a terribly real phenomenon. However, both the establishment of social monads as individuals-subjects within the realm of commodity circulation and the State's primal relation with these fractured entities are rooted in the relations of production and the social division of labour which they establish. Through being totally dispossessed of the means of labour, the direct producer emerges as the 'free' and 'naked' worker, cut off from the network of personal, statutory and territorial bonds that actually constituted him in medieval society. *Such dispossession therefore imprints a determinate structure on his labour:* 'Only the products of mutually independent acts of labour, performed in isolation, can confront each other as commodities.'⁶ Strictly speaking, what is involved is a mode of articulation of labour processes which places structural limits on the real interdependence of the producers introduced by the socialization of labour. Within a framework imposed by the relations of production, their labours are performed independently of one another as private labours – that is to say, without the producers having to organize their co-operation in advance. It is in this situation that the law of value holds sway.

Of course, this structure of the relations of production and the labour process does not directly institute the precise forms of individualization assumed by the divided social body. It rather induces a material frame of reference – *spatial and temporal matrices* which are the *presuppositions* of the capitalist social division of labour, above all within the production process and at the stage

designated by Marx as that of machinery and large-scale industry. This primal material framework is the mould of social atomization and splintering, and it is embodied in the practices of the labour process itself. At one and the same time presupposition of the relations of production and embodiment of the labour process, this framework consists in the organization of a continuous, homogeneous, cracked and fragmented space-time such as lies at the basis of Taylorism: a cross-ruled, segmented and cellular space in which each fragment (individual) has its place, and in which each emplacement, while corresponding to a fragment (individual), must present itself as homogeneous and uniform; and a linear, serial, repetitive and cumulative time, in which the various moments are integrated with one another, and which is itself oriented towards a finished product – namely, the space-time materialized *par excellence* in the production line. In short, the individual, who is much more than a product of the juridical-political ideology engendered by commodity relations, appears here as the focal point, identical with the human body itself, at which a number of practices within the social division of labour are materially crystallized. The quite distinct social organizations of the Middle Ages and of capitalism (individualization) correspond to equally distinct corporalities. Under capitalism, the expropriation of the worker's means of production, which creates labour-power as the basis of surplus-value, unleashes an entire process whereby, as Marx already showed, the body becomes a mere 'appendage of the machine' decomposed into 'the few grand fundamental forms of motion which, despite all the diversity of the instruments used, apply necessarily to every productive action of the human body'.⁷

It is in this individualization that the institutional materiality of the capitalist State takes root. The State inscribes in its skeletal structure the representation of the unity (national representative State) and organization-regulation (hierarchical and bureaucratic centralism) of the constitutive fracturings of the *people-nation*. At the same time, its apparatuses are moulded in such a way that they exercise power over the ensemble so constituted: they realize the very material frame of reference or space-time matrix that is implied

by the relations of production. The internal organization of the bureaucratic networks and structures requires this frame of reference for the co-ordination of its elements – even though the framework is differentially concretized in bureaucratic administration and in the factory despotism of Taylorism and the production line. In the former, it is a question of restructuring political space and replacing personal links of status, privilege and so on by an anonymous organization whose links are at once continuous, homogeneous, linear, equidistant, and segmented, fractured and partitioned.

Now, the State does not simply record this socio-economic reality: it enters into the constitution of the social division of labour by constantly producing social fracturing-individualization. This also takes place through the processes of ideology: the State consecrates and institutionalizes this individualization by constituting the socio-economic monads as juridical and political individuals-persons-subjects. I am referring here not to the official discourse of political philosophy, nor simply to the judicial system, but to the State's material ideological practices as a whole – ideology not being located exclusively in ideas – and to their impact in the realm of the economy and society. This ideology of individualization not only serves to mask and obscure class relations (the capitalist State never presents itself as a class State), but also plays an active part in the divisions and isolation (individualization) of the popular masses. It is therefore not so much a question of the ideology constituted, systematized and formulated by the organic intellectuals of the bourgeoisie – which is always a second-order ideology – as it is of the primary and 'spontaneous' forms of ideology that are secreted by the social division of labour and directly embodied in the state apparatuses and the practices of power.

However, the State does more than just inculcate the dominant ideology, even if we understand the latter as being materialized in certain practices; the State never merely concretizes, at the level of everyday life, the various rights and obligations, the distinction between private and public, and so on. It plays a role in forging this individuality through a set of *techniques of knowledge* (science) to

which Foucault has given the name *disciplines*: ‘... They may be concisely designated as a modality of power for which individual differences are of relevance.’ Foucault goes on to characterize this role of the State by means of the term *normalization*: ‘Like surveillance and together with it, normalization becomes one of the major instruments of power at the end of the classical era. Signs expressing status, privilege and affiliation tend to be replaced, or at least supplemented, by a whole ladder of normalcy, the rungs of which, while indicating membership in a homogeneous social body, themselves serve to classify, hierarchize and distribute social rank. In a certain sense, the power of normalization imposes homogeneity. But it plays a role of individualization by allowing gaps to be measured, levels and particularities to be established, and differences to be rendered useful through mutual adjustment.’ This moment of normalization, ‘in which a new technology of power and an original political anatomy of the body were brought into play’, was crystallized in that modern form of power which he designates by the term *panoptism*.⁸ Foucault himself draws a sharp distinction between ideological inculcation and normalization, considering that ideology is located in ideas alone and that it can never be involved when there is a question of practices or techniques. In reality, however, the primal forms of the dominant ideology are already materialized in state practices and thus enter into the process of normalization itself.

For this mechanism goes far beyond ideological inculcation or, for that matter, straightforward physical repression. The emerging relationship between the Power-State and the body testifies to the individualization of the social body. To be sure, relations between the Power-State and the body as a political institution invested by power cover a much broader field. But despite the thousands of more or less refined analyses that argue the contrary, the constitutive relations between the State and the precise forms of capitalist corporality are not first of all grounded on commodity relations, on the body-commodity of consumer society, on the body-spectacle invested by the tokens of exchange, or, in a word, on the commodity fetishism of the body. The political technology of the

body has its primary roots in the frame of reference of the relations of production and the social division of labour. It is this which allows us to resolve the essential problem for the theory of the State: that is, to pinpoint that individualization of the social body which is the original ground of classes in their capitalist specificity. Individualization does not refer to a 'concrete individual' emerging in the civil society of generalized commodity production and giving rise to a State based on such individuals – a kind of national-popular State which later becomes a class State; nor is it the generic reality of a 'biological individual', conceived as the natural seat of needs which is alienated-reified in the State. Individualization rather constitutes the material expression in capitalist bodies of the existing relations of production and social division of labour; and it is equally the material effect of state practices and techniques forging and subordinating this (political) body.

On this precise question, then, Foucault's elaboration has considerable value, since it furnishes a materialist analysis of certain institutions of power. Not only does it sometimes concur with Marxist analyses – a point which Foucault is careful not to see, or state – but in a number of respects it may even enrich them.

Of course, Foucault objects to any interpretation of this materiality of power (and thus of the State) as rooted in the relations of production and social division of labour. Deleuze is the main writer to have taken up the differences between Foucault's thought and Marxism.⁹ He shows that, for Foucault, the frame of reference of power is prior to its concretization in any particular field, and that it constitutes a 'diagram' (*panoptism*) or 'abstract machine' immanent to each field. It is not rooted in 'the economic', because 'the entire economy – for example, the workshop or factory – presupposes these mechanisms of power.' As a matter of fact, Foucault endorses these remarks in his recent work *La volonté de savoir*.

We should not attach great importance to this aspect of the analysis. In the end, explanations such as that given by Deleuze push Foucault's thought into the camp of idealism. Of course, it would be easy to argue that these diagrams or machines (whence

and how do they appear?) bear a curious resemblance to diverse mental structures and similar categories; and that, whatever is said and however much the heterogeneity of the fields is stressed, the supposedly shattering discovery of the diagram as ‘the immanent common cause’ brings us back to nothing other than the old structural homology of structuralism. Derrida pointed out as much a long time ago.¹⁰ We could also, and with greater justice, reproach Foucault for the fact that his positions frequently result in purely descriptive analyses or, still more often, in a kind of neo-functionalism that takes over the epistemological presuppositions of the most traditional functionalism. For example: ‘The panoptic device is not simply a bridge or conducting wire stretched between a power mechanism and a function; it is a way of operating power relations in a function and of operating a function through these power relations.’¹¹ As I have indicated, Malinowski and Parsons were already saying the same thing.

But I repeat: we should not attach too much importance to Foucault’s second-order epistemological discourse. Several of his analyses are not only compatible with Marxism: they can be understood only if it is taken as their starting-point. *Two conditions have to be fulfilled, however.*

First, we must have a correct conception of ‘the economic’ that grounds the institutional specificity of modern power. We must therefore discard Foucault’s own conception, which he occasionally uses to relate this specificity to the economy, but which most frequently leads him to reject Marxism and the material foundation of institutions in the economy. In neither case, however, is he concerned with the relations of production and with the social division of labour that they entail. When he refers to the economy in connection with the grounding of institutions, it is essentially to discuss such phenomena as population pressure in the eighteenth century or the utilitarian necessity of ‘profit-maximization’ in ‘modern production’. And it is interesting that, when he brings in the economy in order to refute Marxism, he refers to commodity-producing societies based on relations of exchange and circulation: ‘It is often said that the model of a society in which the constitutive

elements are individuals is borrowed from the abstract juridical forms of contract and exchange. Commodity-producing society is supposed to have been represented as a contractual association of isolated legal subjects. Maybe ... But we should not forget that, in the same era, there existed a technique for really constituting individuals as correlative elements of a given power and knowledge.’¹² Now, it is clearly impossible to bring the materiality of the state apparatus into relation with ‘the economic’ if the latter is understood as referring simply to demography or the industrial revolution – that is to say, to productive *technique*. Nor can this be done (and here Foucault is perfectly correct) if ‘the economic’ is held to designate exclusively or principally the sphere of circulation and commodity-exchange – a designation that a certain kind of Marxism has long attempted to convey.

Second, the relationship between the State and the relations of production and social division of labour must be grasped in all its complexity by means of the spatial and temporal matrices. In the section below on the nation, I shall analyse more fully these primary matrices, which are present in the material organization and practical techniques of power. They will be explained there in terms quite different from Foucault’s mysterious and almost metaphysical diagram – and above all different from the Deleuze-Guattari version, which, in the purest spiritualist tradition, posits an original machine (*Urstaat*) or ideal-abstract Despot-State haunting the history of various States and powers in search of a perfect incarnation.

II. The Roots of Totalitarianism

At any event, the individualization of the social body over which the power of the modern State asserts itself refers us to the capitalist relations of production and social division of labour. The State here plays a decisive role, which I designated in *Political Power and Social Classes* as its ‘isolation effect’. Although I did then point out that the effect is ‘terrifyingly real’,¹³ I tended to restrict it essentially to

mechanisms of juridico-political ideology and to the ideological role of the State. We can now see, however – and here lies Foucault's really original contribution – that this role of the State finds expression in a materiality consubstantial with its own structure: namely, the materiality of the techniques for exercising power which shape even the corporality of the subjects over whom this power is exercised.

I shall take this opportunity to pose for the very first time the problem of *modern totalitarianism* – a phenomenon of which fascism is but one expression. Now, the problem can only be elucidated by successive approximations and in those still valid terms which I employed, albeit rather restrictively, in *Political Power and Social Classes*. I then saw clearly that dual movement whereby the modern State creates individualizations and privatizations by constituting itself as their unity and homogenization – a movement, that is to say, both of creating modes of isolation (of which the people-nation is composed) and of representing their unity (in the modern national-popular State). I also understand that *in this dual movement, for the first time in history, there can be no limit de jure or in principle to the State's activity and encroachment in the realm of the individual-private*. The individual-private sphere is created by the State concomitantly with its relative separation from the public space of society. Therefore, not only is this separation but one specific form of the State's presence in socio-economic relations, it also involves an unprecedented state presence in those relations. At the time, I saw in this exclusively the effect of ideological mechanisms – although, to be sure, a terrifyingly material one. The following two passages, for example, do pose the problem but in a clearly restrictive manner.

The first concerns precisely the relationship between the totalitarian phenomenon and the legitimacy principle of the modern State: 'In particular, the capitalist state derives its *principle of legitimacy* from the fact that it presents itself as the unity of the people-nation, understood as an ensemble of homogeneous entities, identical and disparate, which it establishes as political individuals-citizens ... It is here that it differs radically from other forms of

despotism, for example from “absolute” political power, which is formally similar, but which is carried on by forms of tyranny founded on divine-sacred legitimacy. Yet these forms, as found in slave or feudal states, certainly bound power within *strictly defined* limits. In other words, it is exactly that type of legitimacy of the capitalist state (representing the unity of people-nation), which allows the specific functioning of the state encapsulated by the term “totalitarianism”.¹⁴

The second concerns the relationship between the totalitarian phenomenon and bourgeois political ideology: ‘Bourgeois political ideology’s particular function of isolation and cohesion leads to a totally remarkable internal contradiction, sometimes thematized in the theories of the social contract by the distinction and relation between the *pact of civil association* and the *pact of political domination*. This ideology sets agents up as individuals/subjects, free and equal, and presents them as it were in a pre-social state, and so defines the specific isolation of social relations. This aspect which has been described as ‘bourgeois individualism’ is well known. But it is important to point out the other, perhaps right, side of the coin. These individuals/persons, who are individualized in this way, do not seem able in one and the same theoretical movement to be unified and attain their social existence except by means of gaining political existence in the state. The result is that the private individual’s freedom suddenly appears to vanish before the authority of the state which embodies the general will. Indeed, for bourgeois political ideology *there can be no limit based on law or principle to the activity and encroachment of the state* in the so-called sphere of the individual/private. In the last analysis, this sphere appears to have no other function but that of providing a reference point, which is also a *vanishing point*, for the omnipresence and omniscience of the political instance. In this sense Hobbes appears to be the true anticipation of the theories of social contract and Hegel of their culmination: this is a complex case, but so are all theoretical cases. Rousseau’s characteristic position should be noted: “Man must be as independent as possible from other men and as dependent as possible on the state.” It is even clearer in the classic

example of the physiocrats, fierce partisans of *laissez-faire* in the economic and equally fierce partisans of political authoritarianism: they called for the absolute monarch to embody the general will and interest. All this is also characteristic of liberal political ideology: the best example is the clear but often misunderstood influence of Hobbes on Locke and on the classical British Liberal political school of “utilitarianism”, on Bentham, on James Mill and, above all, on John Stuart Mill.’¹⁵

Although the terms of the problem still seem to me valid, the roots of the solution have essentially to be sought elsewhere. Individualization and privatization of the social body are grounded on practices and techniques of power employed by a State which, in one and the same movement, totalizes the divided monads and incorporates their unity into its institutional structure. The private is a mere replica of the public; for if any reduplication at all is inscribed in the State and if it is already present in the relations of production and social division of labour, this is precisely because the State defines its contours. Thus, the individual-private is not an intrinsic obstacle to state activity, but a space which the modern State constructs in the process of traversing it: it becomes an ever-receding horizon to the very extent that the State comes into play. The individual-private forms an integral part of the strategic field constituted by the modern State, which fixes it as the target of its power. In short, it exists only in and through the State.

These points are clearly true of the private individual – that target which cannot be lined up by itself, that supposed subject of inalienable liberties, human rights and a *habeas corpus* in which the *corpus* or body is entirely moulded by the State. But they are also true of all the seats of privatization. Let us just consider the private locus *par excellence*: namely, the modern *family*. In reality, the family is established only in strict concomitance with the emerging public sphere of the modern State – not, therefore, as the intrinsic outside of a rigidly demarcated public space, but as the totality of material state practices which mould the *paterfamilias* (worker, educator, soldier or functionary), the school-child in the modern sense of the term, and above all, the mother. Strictly speaking, the

modern family and State are not two distinct, equidistant and mutually limiting spaces (private and public): contrary to the now-classical analyses of the Frankfurt School (Adorno, Marcuse et al.), the one is not the base of the other. Although the two institutions are neither isomorphous nor tied to each other in a straightforward relation of homology, they are nevertheless part of one and the same configuration. For it is not the 'external' space of the modern family which shuts itself off from the State, but rather the State which, at the very time that it set itself up as the public space, traces and assigns the site of the family through shifting, mobile partitions.

There is thus no limit *de jure* or in principle to the modern State's encroachment on the private. However paradoxical it may seem, the very separation of public and private that is established by the State opens up for it boundless vistas of power. The premises of the modern phenomenon of totalitarianism lie in this separation and affect the countries in the East as well as western societies. The well-known state forms in the East do not spring from abolition of the individual as the last barrier to power. Rooted in the 'capitalist aspects' of the relations of production and social division of labour, the process of individualization-isolation is well and truly at work, even though its mode of development and the forms it assumes – especially in the juridical-political sphere – are far from identical with the ones we know in the West. The state-established distinction between public and private (according to which the workers are private because separated from the public sphere and from political power) is also in force in these countries, even though statism has attained sizeable proportions. But no more than in the West does this involve state invasion of a private sphere with fixed boundaries; the State rather travels a further distance along the road of the modern State with its own materiality.

Of course these are merely preliminary remarks. For when we say that the individual-private is not a limitation on, but the very conduit of the power of the modern State, we do not mean that that power has no limits at all. It is just that these derive not from some natural condition of the individual-private, but from popular struggle and the class relationship of forces: the State, too, is a

specific material condensation of a given relationship of forces, which is itself a class relation. Thus, the individual-private appears as a *resultant* of this relationship of forces and of its condensation in the State. Although the individual-private has no intrinsic essence opposing absolute external barriers to the State's power, it limits that power through being one of the privileged modern representations of the class relationship *within* the State. The nature of this limit is well known: it is called *representative democracy*. However truncated by the dominant classes and by the materiality of the State, it still constitutes a mode whereby popular struggle and resistance are inscribed in that materiality; and while not the only limit to the power of the State, it is nevertheless decisive. It is probably not of absolute significance in that it is born on the terrain of capitalism. But it remains a barrier to power and will doubtless continue to be of consequence as long as a State and social classes exist. The same goes for human and civil rights, which were conquered not by the individual facing the State but by oppressed classes. Indeed, the extension or contraction of the individual-private expresses the advance or retreat of their struggles insofar as they take the above political form. This is so not because popular struggle and resistance thereby carve out a domain external to the State (the individual-private), but because they are located on the strategic terrain of the State itself, which, in its modern form, appears as a public-private space. Both in the West and the East, these rights may serve as a barrier to the existing power, whose totalitarian roots extend to the very process of individualization and to the separation between public and private instituted by the modern State.

There are two further consequences:

(a) Modern totalitarianism, in both fascist and other forms, is not a 'phenomenon' that can be put down to a given conjuncture of the class struggle. Such conjunctures are able to give birth to modern

totalitarian States precisely because the roots of the evil are lodged in the very heart of the relations of production, the social division of labour, and the material framework of the State.

(b) However, contrary to all ideologies of totalitarianism both old and new, the actual emergence of totalitarian forms of State can by no means be explained as a simple blossoming of these buds: it depends on the class struggle in all its complexity. For my part, I have tried to show in *Fascism and Dictatorship* and *The Crisis of the Dictatorships*¹⁶ that these totalitarian forms of fascism, military dictatorship and Bonapartism constitute, in western societies, *exceptional forms of State* quite distinct from parliamentary-democratic ones.

These remarks apply *mutatis mutandis* to the totalitarian aspects of power in the East. For they too cannot be explained simply by reference to the roots of totalitarianism – which quite clearly do exist – and to the capitalist aspects of the various States. Only exact historical analysis can unravel the considerable peculiarities of this form of State, which is moreover not an exception but the rule. Such work is beginning to appear in France itself, in the different perspectives of Jean Elleinstein and Charles Bettelheim, not to speak of the traditional analyses of the Trotskyist current, from which we have learnt a great deal even though they do not seem to be satisfactory. If I mention these together, it is evidently because they all refer to the method of Marxism. No doubt Marxism alone cannot explain everything. But what of those primitive ‘anti-Marxists’ who currently argue that Marxism is more or less incapable of explaining events in the East? I would really like to hear of *just one* work of theirs that has so much as attempted this indispensable task of historical analysis.

With regard to the roots of totalitarianism, then, the analysis which grounds state materiality on the relations of production and social division of labour is again neither heterogeneous nor complementary to analysis of that materiality in terms of social classes and the class struggle. There can be no question of first ‘deducing’ the state organizational framework from individualization of the social body over which power is exercised,

and afterwards bringing it into relation with the class struggle and political domination. For in its relation to the capitalist process and division of labour, this process of individualization is nothing other than the outlining of the terrain on which classes and the class struggle are constituted in their capitalist specificity. Unlike caste-classes or slave and medieval Estates – ‘closed’ classes to which agents belonged once and for all by their very nature – classes under capitalism are ‘open’: they are grounded on the distribution and circulation of individualized agents among the bourgeoisie, the working class, the petty bourgeoisie, and classes based in the countryside. These open classes give rise to a previously unheard-of state role: that of *apportioning-distributing* individualized agents among the classes. The State is thus called upon to shape and condition, train and subordinate these agents in such a way that they are able to occupy class positions to which they are not tied by nature or by birth. This role falls especially to the schools, but it is also fulfilled by the army, prisons and the state administration. Through the mechanisms of individualization, the capitalist specificity of classes is already traced in the materiality of the State: the techniques of exercising power in the school or army (that is, the disciplines of normalization-individualization) are consubstantial with the role of these institutions in training-apportioning-distributing agents-individuals among the classes. Finally, being inscribed in capitalist corporality, this individualization possesses a meaning and modalities which vary according to the social class. There is a bourgeois and a working-class individualization, a bourgeois and a working-class body, just as there is a bourgeois family and a working-class family. In other words, there are different modalities of capitalist individualization and corporality, just as there are different modalities of the capitalist family that is grounded on the process of individualization.

⁶ Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, Penguin/NLR, p. 132.

- ⁷ *ibid.*, p. 617. See the remarkable works by J. M. Brohm, *Corps et politique*, Paris 1975 and *Sociologie politique du sport*, Paris 1976.
- ⁸ Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir*, Paris 1975, pp. 194–5 and *passim*.
- ⁹ See article in *Critique*, p. 1210. (Reference in note 10.)
- ¹⁰ In his critique of Foucault's *Madness and Civilisation* and *L'écriture et la différence*.
- ¹¹ *Surveiller et punir*, *op. cit.*, p. 208.
- ¹² *ibid.*, p. 195.
- ¹³ *Political Power and Social Classes*, *op. cit.*, p. 130.
- ¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 291.
- ¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 219.
- ¹⁶ *Fascism and Dictatorship*, NLB 1974; *The Crisis of the Dictatorships*, NLB 1976.

I. Law and Terror

The third example on which I shall dwell concerns the role of law. This interests us for several reasons: above all, it allows us to pose with precision the problem of repression in the exercise of power. For in this respect, too, the capitalist State represents a veritable break with pre-capitalist forms.

In fact, it was only at a very late historical stage, when the capitalist State was already being constituted, that law first appeared as a limitation upon state arbitrariness, and as a barrier to a certain form of violence. This 'State based on law', conceived as the contrary of unlimited power, gave birth to the illusory opposition Law/Terror. I say illusory, because law and certain rules have always been present in the constitution of power: the Asiatic or despotic State was, for example, based on Babylonian or Assyrian law, the slave State on Greek or Roman law, and the feudal State on the juridical forms of the Middle Ages. Even the most bloody state form has set itself up as a juridical organization, giving itself an expression in law and functioning in accordance with a juridical form: as we know only too well, this was the case with Stalin and the 1936 Constitution, reputedly 'the most democratic in the world'. Nothing could be more mistaken than to counterpose the rule of law to arbitrariness, abuse of power, and the prince's act of will. Such a vision corresponds to the juridical-legalist conception of the State –

to that political philosophy of the established bourgeois State which was opposed by both Marx and Max Weber, and which never made any impression on the theorists of bloody state management, Machiavelli and Hobbes. The split between law and violence is false even, or above all, with regard to the modern State. For unlike its pre-capitalist counterparts, this supremely juridical State holds a monopoly of violence and ultimate terror, *a monopoly of war*.

Thus, in every State, law is an integral part of the repressive order and of the organization of violence. By issuing rules and passing laws, the State establishes an initial field of injunctions, prohibitions and censorship, and thus institutes the practical terrain and object of violence. Furthermore, law organizes the conditions for physical repression, designating its modalities and structuring the devices by means of which it is exercised. In this sense, law is *the code of organized public violence*. Those who neglect the role of law in organizing power are always the ones who neglect the role of physical repression in the functioning of the State. A clear example of this is provided by Foucault, whose latest work *La volonté de savoir* is a logical sequel to the aberrations of his earlier *Surveiller et punir*.

The chain of Foucault's reasoning may be somewhat schematically represented as follows: (a) the opposition legality-terror is false, because law has always gone together with the exercise of violence and physical repression; (b) in modern societies, the exercise of power is based much less on overt violence and repression than on subtler mechanisms that are supposedly 'incongruous' with violence: namely, the mechanisms employed by various 'disciplines'. 'And although the juridical could serve to represent, in a no doubt incomplete manner, a power that was essentially based on blood-letting and death, it is utterly incongruous with the new methods of power, which rest not on right but on technique, not on law but on normalization, not on punishment but on control – and which are exercised at specific levels and in particular forms that go beyond the State and its apparatuses.'¹⁷ As Castel puts it, following Foucault, the exercise of power involves a passage from authority-coercion to manipulation-persuasion:¹⁸ in other words, the famous

‘internalization’ of repression by the dominated masses. Inevitably, Foucault is led to underestimate at the very least the role of law in the exercise of power within modern societies; but he also underestimates the role of the State itself, and fails to understand the function of the repressive apparatuses (army, police, judicial system, etc.) as means of exercising physical violence that are located at the heart of the modern State. They are treated instead as mere parts of the disciplinary machine which patterns the internalization of repression by means of normalization.

Now, while the first point concerning the constitutive relationship between law and the exercise of violence is indeed correct, the second one is by and large false. Adopted by a current of thought that is much broader than, and often very distinct from, Foucault, this second line of reasoning has taken root in the couplet violence-consent or repression-ideology that has long been a characteristic of analyses of power. The central theme is quite straightforward: modern power is grounded not on organized physical violence, but on ideological-symbolic *manipulation*, the organization of consent, and the internalization of repression (‘the inner cop’). This conception originated in the early analyses of bourgeois politico-juridical philosophy – that philosophy which, by counterposing violence and law, saw in the law-based State and the rule of law realities that impose an inherent limitation on violence. In its various modern continuations – ranging from the celebrated Frankfurt School analyses of the replacement of the police by the family as the authoritarian instance, through those of Marcuse to Bourdieu’s analysis of so-called symbolic violence – the theme of internalized repression or, more generally, what we might call the ‘softening’ of physical violence in the exercise of power has become an almost commonplace idea.

For our present purposes, then, this current may be said to have two essential features: on the one hand, underestimation of the role of physical repression, in the strong sense of deadly, armed constraint of the body, and on the other, a conception of power in which the terms of the couplet repression-ideology constitute zero-sum components or quantities. According to this perspective, any

diminution or contraction of physical violence in the functioning and maintenance of power cannot but correspond to an accentuation or increase of ideological inculcation (seen as symbolic violence or internalized repression).

There is little fundamental difference between the above conception and the one dominant in a number of currently fashionable analyses that ground consent on the wish of the masses (for fascism or whatever) or on love of the Master.¹⁹ For these also neglect the role of organized physical violence, at the same time reducing power to repression-prohibition. The resulting subjectivization of the exercise of power takes the form of seeking ‘the reasons for obedience’ in the desire for or love of power – factors which here replace the role imputed to ideology in the internalization of repression. If law enters into the picture, it does so not as the coding of physical repression, but as a form of the Master, who induces the desire and love of his subjects simply through his presence, self-expression and discourse. The couplet repression-ideology gives way to the couplet law-love or prohibition-desire. But the role of violence in grounding power is still underestimated, and *all that is ever mentioned are the reasons for consent.*

Of course, the fact that these analyses raise the question of consent to power is not at all objectionable – quite the contrary. What is disturbing is both their neglect of the role of organized physical violence in exercising repression, and their reduction of power to prohibition and symbolic or internalized repression. By grounding consent on love-desire of repression, they become unable to grasp the positive *material reasons* for this phenomenon – reasons such as the concessions made to the masses by the existing power, which play a decisive role over and above that of the dominant ideology. At the same time, insistence on the positivity of power should not be allowed to obscure either the question of repression or the role of ideology itself in relation to consent. Yet this is precisely what happens in Foucault’s writings. Unlike the above currents, he does have the merit of bringing out one aspect of the power techniques that materially organize the submission of dominated layers – namely, the aspect of the normalization disciplines. But his

analyses, too, constantly play down the role of overt physical violence. (A mere symptom of this is his underestimation of the role of law in giving coded form to such violence.)

In the omnifunctional position assigned to them by Foucault, the techniques of power absorb not only the question of physical violence but also that of consent. The latter thereby becomes a non-problem which is either given no theoretical elucidation at all or else is collapsed into the 'internalized repression' type of analysis. But over and above the disciplines of normalization, there must be other 'reasons' that explain consent. For if those disciplines were enough to account for submission, *how could they admit the existence of struggles?* Here we come to the central impasse of Foucault's analyses: his failure to provide a basis for that celebrated 'resistance' to power of which he is so enamoured. In point of fact, there has to be organized physical violence for the very reason that there has to be consent – that is to say, because of the universality and primacy of struggles based on exploitation. It is this primary, inescapable reality which accounts for the fact that *struggles are always at the foundation of power*. If power (the Law, the Master) is instead made the basis of struggle, or if 'power' and 'resistance' are considered as entirely equivalent terms of a relation, then one is led to derive consent from love or the wish for power, or else to obscure the problematic character of consent itself. In either case, the role of violence is completely passed over.

What then is the truth of the matter? Unlike its pre-capitalist counterparts, the capitalist State holds *a monopoly of legitimate physical violence*. Max Weber must be given the credit for establishing this point and for demonstrating that the legitimacy of its concentration of organized force is a 'rational-legal' legitimacy based on law. Indeed, the capitalist State's prodigious accumulation of the means of bodily constraint goes hand in hand with the development of its character as a State based on law. Now, this circumstance gives rise to some quite remarkable effects. The degree of overt physical violence exercised in the various contexts of 'private', extra-state power – from the factory to the famous micro-power situations – declines as an exact function of the State's

monopoly of legitimate physical force. The European capitalist States, in particular, were constituted through pacification of territories torn by feudal wars. And once political power was institutionalized, these States had less recourse to such violence in normal contexts of domination – even though they now enjoyed a monopoly of its legitimate use – than did the various pre-capitalist States. Of course we should not forget: (a) the exceptional forms of capitalist State (fascism, military dictatorship, etc.) which infest today's world but which are lost from sight in the short memories and Eurocentric light-mindedness of so many theorists (although when they come to the regimes in the East, they suddenly become aware of violence); (b) the supreme terror of *war* (the First and Second World Wars, others ... and now the threat of nuclear war: whoever had the idea that modern power is no longer exercised 'up to the point of death?'); and (c) the conjunctures of accentuated class struggle. But despite all this, overt violence is employed less frequently than in the past: it is exactly as if the State had to apply less force *to the very degree that* it holds a monopoly of its legitimate use.

However, contrary to a now widespread illusion, it does not follow that modern power and domination are no longer grounded on physical violence. Even if violence is not concretized in the daily exercise of power as it used to be, it still, and indeed more than ever, occupies a *determining* position. For its very monopolization by the State induces forms of domination in which the numerous methods of establishing consent play the key role. In order to grasp this point, we must go beyond the notion of a simple complementarity of violence and consent, modelled on Machiavelli's image of a Centaur that is half-human, half-beast. Physical violence and consent do not exist side by side like two calculable homogeneous magnitudes, related in such a way that more consent corresponds to less violence. Violence-terror always occupies a determining place – and not merely because it remains in reserve, coming into the open only in critical situations. *State-monopolized physical violence permanently underlies the techniques of power and mechanisms of consent: it is inscribed in the web of disciplinary and*

ideological devices; and even when not directly exercised, it shapes the materiality of the social body upon which domination is brought to bear.

There can be no question, then, of replacing the couplet law-terror by a trinomial repression-disciplinary normalization-ideology, in which, despite the presence of a third term, the component parts stand in an unchanged relationship to one another as heterogeneous and distinct magnitudes of a quantifiable power, or as modalities of the exercise of a power-essence. We need rather to grasp the material organization of labour as a class relation whose condition of existence and guarantee of reproduction is organized physical violence. The establishment of techniques of capitalist power, the constitution of disciplinary devices (the great ‘enclosure’), the emergence of ideological-cultural institutions from parliament through universal suffrage to the school – all these presuppose state monopolization of violence concealed by the displacement of legitimacy towards legality and by the rule of law. They presuppose this not only in the sense of historical genealogy, but in their very existence and reproduction. To take just one example, the national army is consubstantial with parliament and the capitalist school. But this con-substantiality does not rest only on a common institutional materiality stemming from the social division of labour embodied by these apparatuses; it also rests on the fact that the national army, as an explicit part of the state monopoly of legitimate physical violence, gives rise to the forms of existence and operation of institutions – parliament, school – in which violence does not have to be materialized as such. The regular existence and even the constitution of a law-enacting parliament is unthinkable without the modern national army.

Finally, I should like to say something more about *death itself*. For how is it possible not to see that the changing modes of prosaically dying in one’s bed, the veritable taboo on death in modern societies, and the loss of control by ‘private’ citizens over their own death²⁰ actually converge with the state monopoly of legitimate public terror? Does the State no longer have any function with regard to death? Even when it does not execute people, kill them or threaten to do so, and even when it prevents them from dying, the modern

State manages death in a number of different ways; and medical power is inscribed in present-day law.

State monopolization of legitimate violence therefore remains the determining element of power even when such violence is not exercised in a direct and open manner. This monopoly is not the origin of the new forms of struggle under capitalism; and so true is it that power and struggle summon and condition each other that the role of the mechanisms of organization and consent now correspond to these forms. State concentration of armed force and the disarming-demilitarization of private sectors (which is a precondition of established capitalist exploitation) contribute to shifting the class struggle away from permanent civil war (periodic and regular armed conflicts) towards those new forms of political and trade-union organization of the popular masses against which overt physical violence is, as we know, only conditionally effective. Confronted with a 'public' power, a 'private' people no longer lives political domination as a natural and sacrosanct fatality: it considers the state monopoly of violence to be legitimate only to the extent that legality and judicial regulation give it the hope, and in principle even the formal possibility, of gaining access to power. In short, at the very time that violence is concentrated in specialized state bodies, it becomes less than ever capable of ensuring the reproduction of domination. As I said earlier, the state concentration of force established peace instead of the private armed conflicts and constantly updated holy wars that used to constitute the *catharsis* of the fatality of power. Under the impact of the same state monopoly, these have given way to permanent disputing of political power; and the rule of capitalist law has installed in the very outposts of power the various mechanisms of organizing consent – including, insofar as it masks the state monopolization of physical force, the mechanisms of ideological inculcation.

Although law, as the organizer of repression and physical violence, thus turns out to play an essential role in the exercise of power, it does not for all that exhibit the purely negative logic of rejection, obstruction, compulsory silence, and the ban on public demonstration. Moreover, it is not only because law is also

something other than law that it is never exclusively negative. Even in its repressive role, law involves an eminently positive aspect: *for repression is never identical with pure negativity*. More than a conglomeration of prohibitions and censorship, law has since Greek and Roman times also issued positive injunctions: it does not just forbid or leave be, according to the maxim that all is permitted which is not expressly forbidden by law; it lays down things to be done, dictates positive obligations, and prescribes certain forms of discourse that may be addressed to the existing power. Law does not merely impose silence or allow people to speak, it often *compels* them to speak (to bear witness, denounce others, and so on). More generally, institutionalized law has never been so completely identified with prohibition and censorship that state organization has been divided between law-censorship-negativity and 'something else'-action-positivity. The opposition itself is partially false, since law organizes the repressive field not only as repression of acts forbidden by law, but also as repression of a failure to do what the law prescribes. Law is always present from the beginning in the social order: it does not arrive *post festum* to put order into a pre-existing state of nature. For as the codification of both prohibitions and positive injunctions, law is a constitutive element of the politico-social field.

Repression then is never pure negativity, and it is not exhausted either in the actual exercise of physical violence or in its internalization. There is something else to repression, something about which people seldom talk: namely, *the mechanisms of fear*. I have referred to these material, and by no means subjective, mechanisms as the *theatricals* of that truly Kafkaesque Castle, the modern State. They are inscribed in the labyrinths where modern law becomes a practical reality; and while such concretization is based on the monopoly of legitimate violence, we must still go into Kafka's Penal Colony in order to understand it.

Finally, although law plays an important (positive and negative) role in organizing repression, its efficacy is just as great in the devices of creating consent. It materializes the dominant ideology that enters into these devices, even though it does not exhaust the

reasons for consent. Through its discursiveness and characteristic texture, law-regulation obscures the politico-economic realities, tolerating structural lacunae and transposing these realities to the political arena by means of a peculiar mechanism of concealment-inversion. It thus gives expression to the imaginary ruling-class representation of social reality and power. In this manifestation, which runs parallel to the place it occupies in the repressive machinery, law is an important factor in organizing the consent of the dominated classes – even though *legitimacy* (consent) is neither identical with nor restricted to *legality*. The dominated classes encounter law not only as an occlusive barrier, but also as the reality which assigns the place they must occupy. This place, which is the point of their insertion into the politico-social system, carries with it certain rights as well as duties-obligations, and its investment by the imagination has a real impact on social agents.

Furthermore, a number of the State's activities that go beyond its repressive and ideological role come to be inscribed in the text of the law and even form part of its internal structure. This is true of state economic intervention, but above all of those material concessions which are one of the decisive reasons for consent. Law does not only deceive and conceal, and nor does it merely repress people by compelling or forbidding them to act. It also organizes and sanctions certain *real rights* of the dominated classes (even though, of course, these rights are invested in the dominant ideology and are far from corresponding in practice to their juridical form); and it has inscribed within it the material concessions imposed on the dominant classes by popular struggle.

Nevertheless, it is evident that *the activity, role and place of the State stretch a very long way beyond law and judicial regulation* – a fact which cannot be grasped by a juridical-legalistic conception or by current psychoanalytic theories such as those expressed in Legendre's interesting works.²¹

(a) The activity and concrete functioning of the State by no means invariably take the form of law-rules: there is always a set of state practices and techniques that escape juridical systematization and order. This is not to say that they are 'anomic' or arbitrary in the

strong sense of the term. But the logic they obey – that of the relationship of forces between classes in struggle – is somewhat distinct from the logic of the juridical order, and law invests it only at a certain distance and within a specific range.

(b) The State often transgresses law-rules of its own making by acting without reference to the law, but also by acting directly against it. In its very discursiveness, each juridical system allows the Power-State to disregard its own laws and even enters an appropriate variable in the rules of the game that it organizes. This is called *the higher interests of the State (raison d'Etat)* – which, strictly speaking, entails both that legality is always compensated by illegalities ‘on the side’, and that state illegality is always inscribed in the legality which it institutes. Thus, Stalinism and the totalitarian aspects of power in the East are not principally due to ‘violations of socialist legality’. Every juridical system includes illegality in the additional sense that gaps, blanks or ‘loopholes’ form an integral part of its discourse. It is a question here not merely of oversights or blind-spots arising out of the ideological operation of concealment underlying the legal order, but of express devices that allow the law to be breached. Lastly, of course, there are cases where the State engages in straightforward violations of its own law – violations which, while appearing as crude transgressions not covered by the law, are no less part of the structural functioning of the State. The state-institutional structure is always organized in such a way that both the State and the dominant classes operate at once in accordance with the law and against the law. Many laws would never have existed in their present form if a certain rate of ruling-class violation had not been anticipated by, and written into, the workings of the state machinery. Thus, even when illegality is distinct from legality, it is not identified with a kind of parallel organization or State separated from the *de jure* State of legality, and still less does it form a chaotic non-State counterposed to the real State of legality. Not only does illegality often enter into the law, but illegality and legality are themselves part of one and the same institutional structure.

This is essentially how we should understand Marx's argument that every State is a class 'dictatorship'. All too often it is taken to mean that the State is a power above the law – where the term law is opposed to violence and force. As we have seen, however, even the most dictatorial of States is never devoid of law; and the existence of law or legality has never forestalled any kind of barbarism or despotism. In Marx's statement, the term 'dictatorship' refers to the precise fact that every State is organized as a single functional order of legality and illegality, of legality shot through with illegality.

(c) The activity of the State always overflows the banks of law, since it can, within certain limits, modify its own law. The State is not the simple representation of some eternal law, be it a universal prohibition or a law of nature. If such were the case – and this needs to be made clear – law would have *de jure* primacy over the State. (This is indeed the cornerstone of the juridical conception of the State, whose present-day convergence with the analytical, or psychoanalytical, conception of institutions is not difficult to explain.) Now, it is true that every State is consubstantial with a system of law, and that law is not strictly speaking the utilitarian creation of a pre-existing State of naked might. But in a class-divided society, it is always the State, as the practitioner of legitimate violence and physical repression, which takes precedence over law. Although law organizes this violence, there can be no law or right in such a society without an apparatus that compels its observance and ensures its efficacy or social existence: *the efficacy of law is never that of pure discourse, the spoken word, and the issuing of rules*. Just as there is no violence without law, so law always presupposes an organized force at the service of the legislator (the secular arm). Or, more prosaically: strength remains on the side of the law.

II. Modern Law

Despite the fact that all legal systems have certain characteristics in common, capitalist law is specific in that it forms an *axiomatic system*, comprising a set of *abstract, general, formal and strictly regulated norms*.

A certain variant of Marxism has sought to base this specificity of the capitalist juridical system in the sphere of circulation of capital and commodity-exchange: ‘abstract’ juridical subjects are thus held to correspond to free commodity-traders, and ‘formally’ free and equal individuals to equivalent exchange and ‘abstract’ exchange-value, and so on.²² However, we can hardly grasp the reality of capitalist law by remaining within this sphere. The roots of its specific features (abstraction, universality, formalism) – which also embrace the state monopoly of legitimate violence as opposed to the diffusion of such violence among several bearers that characterizes juridical particularism – have to be sought in the social division of labour and the relations of production. It is these which assign to violence its position and role under capitalism. For by virtue of the expropriation of the means of labour from the direct producers, violence is not present directly and as such (as an ‘extra-economic factor’) in the production process. The axiomatic system of capitalist law constitutes the framework wherein agents who are totally dispossessed of their means of production are given *formal cohesion*; it thus also sketches out the contours of a state space relatively separate from the relations of production. The formal and abstract character of law is inextricably bound up with the real fracturing of the social body in the social division of labour – that is to say, with the individualization of agents that takes place in the capitalist labour process.

Modern law therefore embodies space-time as the material frame of reference of the labour process: a serial, cumulative, continuous and homogeneous space-time. This law institutes individuals as juridico-political subjects-persons by representing their unity in the people-nation. It consecrates, and thus helps to establish, the differential fragmentation of agents (individualization) by elaborating the code in which these differentiations are inscribed and on the basis of which they exist without calling into question

the political unity of the social formation. All subjects are free and equal before the law: that is, the discourse of law does not merely hide, but actually expresses the fact that they are different (as subjects-individuals) to the very extent that this difference may be inscribed in a framework of homogeneity. All too often it is said that capitalist law just obscures real differences behind a screen of universal formalism. But in fact, it also helps to establish and consecrate individual and class differences within its very structure, while at the same time setting itself up as a cohesive and organizing system of their *unity-homogenization*. Therein lies the source of the universal, formal and abstract character of the juridical axiomatic. For it presupposes agents who have been 'freed' from the territorial-personal bonds of pre-capitalist, and even serf, societies – bonds resting upon a law which was essentially composed of the statuses, privileges and customs of castes or Estates, and in which the political and the economic were closely intertwined. Of course, *law* does not itself *free* these agents: it rather intervenes in the process whereby they are disentangled and separated from the bonds that differentiated them according to class or Estate (those closed classes which served as the fount of signs, symbols and meanings). Law participates in this process by helping to establish and consecrate the new great Difference: *individualization*. The modern legal system works for this individualization either in a parallel, and more or less contradictory, relationship with other state techniques and practices (the normalization disciplines) or else by covering and moulding itself to them.

Now, insofar as they materialize the dominant ideology, capitalist law and the capitalist juridical system present certain further peculiarities. The centre of legitimacy shifts away from the sacred towards legality. Law itself, which is now the embodiment of the people-nation, becomes the fundamental category of state sovereignty; and juridical-political ideology supplants religious ideology as the predominant form. Although these changes coincide with the emergence of a state monopoly of legitimate force, they have much deeper roots than that. The function of legitimacy shifts towards the impersonal and abstract instance of law, at the very

time that the agents 'loosen' and 'free' themselves from their territorial-personal bonds. It is exactly as if the abstract, formal and general character of law had rendered it the mechanism most suitable for fulfilling the key function of every dominant ideology: namely, that of cementing together the social formation under the aegis of the dominant class.

Apart from the fact that it imposes a framework of cohesion on social agents, capitalist law is pre-eminently able to represent their unity by writing it into the social imagination and to *cement* the various processes of individualization. Organized in the mode of the *pure sign* (abstraction, universality, formalism) law takes up a privileged position in the ideological mechanism of imaginative representation 'as soon as' the social agents become atomized and severed from their natural means of labour. In the pre-capitalist formations, by contrast, it was the mode of symbolization peculiar to religion ('religion binds people together') which allowed the consecration of links already embedded in the land, the family, and the caste or Estate. These links gave rise to a graduated series of primary symbolizations in the mode of the sacred – a series which the State registered by drawing its legitimacy from its position, at the top of the pyramid of meaning, as the incarnation of the sovereign's word and body. As Marx pointed out, it was in these modes of production that ideology played a dominant role; while in the capitalist mode of production, the specific relations of production assign to the economic a role that is at once determining and dominant. Juridical ideology written into law becomes the dominant area of ideology in a mode of production in which ideology no longer plays the dominant role. We must understand by this that the capitalist form of law comes to constitute the fundamental ideological mechanism from the moment that the extraction of surplus-labour (surplus-value) is activated by the very cycle of reproduction of capital (and not by 'extra-economic factors') – from the moment that the sub-symbolizations cementing the various territorial-personal links among social agents are uprooted and destroyed. The rule of capitalist law is grounded on the absence of other signifiers around it.

This specificity of law and the juridical system is inscribed in the peculiar institutional structure of the capitalist State. Indeed, its centralizing-bureaucratic-hierarchic framework is itself possible only through being moulded in a system of general, abstract, formal and axiomatic norms that organize and regulate the impersonal echelons and apparatuses of the exercise of power. What is termed 'administrative law' exactly corresponds to capitalist law's structuring effect on the State. Law and regulation underlie the recruitment of state personnel (through competition and impersonal examination) as well as the functioning of the written text and of the State's *internal* dogma of speech. Its discourse does not embody, reveal or interpret the divine (royal or noble) Word; and nor is it the medium of a more or less direct and personal mystical relationship that each servant entertains with God (the King or Lord). It is rather supposed to give progressively concrete application to abstract and formal law through a logical-deductive chain ('juridical logic') which is nothing other than the trajectory of an order of domination-subordination and decision-execution internal to the State.

If we remember that the state framework is related to the capitalist division of intellectual and manual labour, and that it specifically reproduces intellectual labour, then we shall be able to grasp the relationship between this division and capitalist law. In the legitimacy of the sacred, every subject of power is supposed to bear within himself a share of (divine) *truth*, an inner limit to earthly power (a soul). The mark that is inscribed within him by the body of the (divine) King can never be entirely removed, for status and privilege belong to the realm of natural law. For its part, modern law expresses the capitalist relationship between power and knowledge, as it is condensed in capitalist intellectual labour: outside the law, individuals-subjects contain no knowledge or truth. As law becomes an incarnation of Reason, the struggle against Religion is pursued in the forms of law and juridical ideology, and Enlightenment physical science is conceptualized in juridical categories. Abstract, formal, universal law is the truth of subjects: it is knowledge (in the service of capital) which constitutes juridical-

political subjects and which establishes the difference between private and public. Capitalist law thus gives expression to the process whereby the agents of production are entirely dispossessed of their 'intellectual powers' to the benefit of the dominant classes and of their State.

That things are so may also be seen in the relationship of law and juridical systematization to the specialization of the state apparatuses – a relationship which is manifested in the emergence of a corps of specialized jurists. Provided that this corps is understood in the broad sense, we can see that, as a network 'separated' from society, it probably constitutes the best representative of intellectual labour incorporated in the State. In this broad sense, every state agent – every parliamentarian, politician, policeman, officer, judge, barrister, lawyer, civil servant, social worker, and so on – is an intellectual to the extent that he is a *man of law*, who legislates, knows the laws and regulations, and applies them in concrete ways. *No-one should be ignorant of the law* – that is the fundamental maxim of the modern juridical system, in which no-one but state representatives are able to know the law. This knowledge required of every citizen is not even a special subject of study at school, as if everything were done to keep him in ignorance of what he is supposedly obliged to know. The maxim therefore expresses a relationship whereby the popular masses, whose ignorance of the law's secrets is built into this law and juridical language itself, remain dependent upon, and subordinated to, state functionaries as the makers, protectors and appliers of the law. Modern law is a *state secret* which grounds a form of knowledge monopolized for reasons of State.

This specificity of capitalist law and the capitalist juridical system is therefore based on the existing relations of production and social division of labour; and so it refers us to social classes and the class struggle such as they exist under capitalism.²³ The fact that these are open classes rather than closed castes is of the highest importance with regard to the reproduction both of their positions (extension, contraction, disappearance) and of their agents (specific training-subjection of agents so that they may occupy certain class

positions). Evidently, the abstract, formal and general character of the capitalist juridical system allows it to regulate the relationship between the positions of social classes (capital, wage-labour) and those of agents who are not formally 'tied' to them. It is this system which can regulate *both* the permanent allocation of agents of the dominated classes among the relevant class positions (peasantry, working class, petty bourgeoisie) – which is nothing other than the role of law in expanding the *real submission* of Labour to Capital – *and* the greater or lesser partitioning of these positions and agents in the relationship between the dominant and dominated classes. For in that bourgeois juridical axiom, which expresses a real national-popular class law, everyone is free and equal before the law on condition that he is or becomes a bourgeois. And that, of course, the law at once allows and forbids.

However, this juridical system also corresponds to the peculiar coordinates of political struggle under capitalism.

(a) The axiomatic systematization of law as the framework of formal cohesion assumes a strategic function with regard to the expanded reproduction introduced by capitalism. Whereas pre-capitalist societies exhibited only simple, repetitive and, so to speak, blind reproduction, this expanded form entails that, at the very level of the reproduction process, a strategic calculation is made by the various fractions of capital and their bearers. In its turn, such calculation requires that the rules of the game should possess a modicum of stability sufficient to allow some degree of *forecasting*. This is made possible by axiomatic law, whose systematic character, based on abstract, general, formal and strictly regulated norms, consists in, among other things, the fact that it carries its own rules of transformation. Thus, any changes in law become regulated transformations within its own system – thanks, in particular, to the role of the Constitution.

(b) It is precisely through a system of general, abstract and formal rules that law *regulates* the exercise of power by the state apparatuses, as well as access to these apparatuses themselves. Within a specific form of domination, this legal system controls the process whereby power is apportioned to the various classes and,

above all, the distinct fractions of the bourgeoisie that make up a power-bloc. By thus giving order to their mutual relations within the State, it allows a changed balance of forces in the ruling alliance to find expression at state level without provoking upheavals. Capitalist law, as it were, *damps down* and *channels* political crises, in such a way that they do not lead to crises of the State itself. More generally, capitalist law appears as the necessary form of a State that has to maintain relative autonomy of the fractions of a power-bloc in order to organize their unity under the hegemony of a given class or fraction. This compulsion is further bound up with the State's relative separation from the relations of production – that is to say, with the fact that agents of the economically dominant class (the bourgeoisie) do not directly coincide with the occupiers and agents of the State.

This is moreover the way in which modern law was historically constituted. Its roots go back to the Absolutist State and the seventeenth-century European monarchies. The predominantly capitalist State of Absolutism, which was truly a State of transition to capitalism, already had to confront specific problems of organization concerning relations between the landed nobility and the bourgeoisie. The state's monopolization of war here corresponds to the pacification of social forces ('private wars') which it had been accomplishing since the sixteenth century, and which prepared it for success in that first great war which bore it to the baptismal font: the bloody process of primitive accumulation of capital in favour of the bourgeoisie.

However, the capitalist legal system also takes the dominated classes into account in regulating the exercise of power. Faced with working-class struggle on the political plane, law organizes the structure of the compromise equilibrium permanently imposed on the dominant classes by the dominated. It also regulates the forms in which physical repression is exercised: indeed, we need to stress the fact that this juridical system, these 'formal' and 'abstract' liberties are also conquests of the popular masses. In this sense and this alone does modern law *set the limits* of the exercise of power and of intervention by the state apparatuses. It is very clear from its

abolition in the exceptional forms of capitalist State (fascism, military dictatorship), that this role of law depends on the class relationship of forces and provides the outline of the barrier to ruling-class power imposed by the dominated classes. Modern law, then, has not intervened against state violence ('law versus terror'); on the contrary, the very letter of the law has played a role in organizing the exercise of violence, always taking into account the resistance of the popular masses. The juridical axiomatic, as I have already indicated, allows political forecasting on the part of the dominant classes: while it expresses a class relationship of forces, it also serves as a prop for strategic calculation by including among the variables of its system the resistance and struggle of the dominated classes.

Finally, with regard to the dominant classes and fractions, the role of law in setting limits expresses the relationship of forces within the power bloc. It becomes concrete above all by delimiting the fields of competence and intervention of the various apparatuses, in which different classes and fractions of this bloc have dominance.

¹⁷ *La volonté de savoir*, op. cit., pp. 117–18.

¹⁸ R. Castel, *Le psychanalysme*, Paris 1976, pp. 288ff.

¹⁹ There is a long list of such works: from Fr. Lyotard (*L'économie libidinale*) through R. Scherer to P. Legendre (*L'amour du censeur*).

²⁰ Ph. Aries, *Histoire de la mort en Occident*, and the works of L. V. Thomas.

²¹ *Jouir du pouvoir*, Paris 1976.

²² In my first and long since out-of-print work *Nature des choses et droit* (1966), I also took this position. However, the reader can rest assured that I have no intention of republishing this text.

²³ See also the works by M. Chemillier-Gendreau, E. Pisier-Kouschner, M. Miaille, Fr. Demichel, J.-P. Colin, G. Labica et al.

The Nation

The last case to which I shall refer is that of the nation – a complex case if ever there was one. In a way, it combines all the impasses of a traditional variant of Marxism. In fact, we have to recognize that there is no Marxist theory of the nation; and despite the passionate debates on the subject that have taken place within the workers movement, it would be far too evasive to say that Marxism has underestimated the reality of the nation.

1. From Marxist reflection about the nation and from the debate in the workers movement,²⁴ the following initial point would seem to emerge: the nation is not identical with the modern nation and the national State, such as they appeared with the rise of capitalism in the West. The term designates ‘something else’ – a specific unit of the overall production of social relations that existed long before capitalism. Insofar as it mapped out new frontiers, new sites and temporalities of social reproduction, the constitution of the nation may be said to coincide with the passage from classless (lineage) society to class society.

In this case too, however, the question of historical origin is the least interesting. More important is the fact that the Marxist classics, while stressing the relationship between nation and social classes, clearly and explicitly recognized that the nation will persist even after the withering away of the State in classless ‘communist’ society. Here then is a reality which, considered as an economic-political and cultural object fundamentally related to social classes,

constantly refers us to the essential politico-strategic question of proletarian internationalism; it is also acknowledged, however, that the nation will persist even after the withering away of the State and the end of class division. This key problem is all the more thorny in that the argument concerning the historical reversibility of the State could be, but is not, employed with reference to the nation. Like the State, it has not existed in classless societies; and yet great care is taken to avoid concluding that the nation, like the State, will no longer exist after the end of class division. Of course it is stressed that the nation will not be the same as it is today. But we find nothing comparable to the analyses of the disappearance of the State: after the end of class division, proletarian internationalism cannot promote the disappearance of the nation in the way that 'the replacement of the government of men by the administration of things' promotes the withering away of the State. How then are we to grasp the reality of the nation – that object both theoretical and real, whose transhistorical irreducibility is so readily admitted? At any event, consideration of this question must proceed through analysis of the modern nation.

2. The second, related point concerns the dissociation of *State* and *nation* within the very framework of capitalism. Above all as a result of discussions on the Austro-Marxist analyses of Otto Bauer, Karl Renner and others, it is gradually becoming clear that, even within the national State, the State cannot entirely encapsulate the nation. Indeed, as is shown by the case of the multinational Austro-Hungarian Empire, one and the same capitalist State can embrace several nations. Conversely, a nation which has not yet succeeded in forging its own State on the basis of capitalism is no less of a nation for that; and it has no less right than others to self-determination. This lies at the root of Lenin's original and radical principle according to which peoples and nations have the right to decide their own future. Unlike the Austro-Marxists, Lenin does not reduce the right of self-determination to mere 'cultural autonomy', but extends it to the right of nations to establish their own State. Although a nation does not need to have its own distinct State in order to exist and be recognized as such, it still by its very nature

has the right to establish one. Of course, problems began to appear, in Lenin's time and even more so afterwards, as soon as the application of this principle was strictly subordinated to 'the interests of the world revolution'; that is to say, once the *right* of a nation to 'divorce' its encompassing State does not designate an 'obligation to divorce', the struggle for secession becomes necessary only when it is in accord with the interests of the working class and the 'international proletariat'. We know that Stalin's policy on this question was the occasion of a dramatic break with Lenin in 1923 on the eve of the latter's death. But what interests us here is the principle itself and the relative dissociation of nation and State which it establishes.

3. This being said, our third point concerns the analysis of the modern nation. There is no difficulty in recognizing that, in capitalist social formations, the nation is both of a specific character and closely bound up with the State. Even if the nation does not exactly coincide with the capitalist State, the latter has the peculiarity of being a national State: for the first time, the national modality becomes relevant to the State's materiality. Indeed, the State here exhibits the *historical tendency* to encompass a single, constant nation (in the modern sense of the term); and while it thus actually pursues the establishment of national unity, modern nations themselves exhibit the historical tendency to form their own States. The social formation, which is the nodal point of the expanded reproduction of social relations, tends to intersect the boundaries of the nation-State; and that uneven development which has marked capitalism since its beginnings tends to root itself in, and bring into interrelationship, the nation-States themselves.

I shall concern myself above all with this last series of points, which, as we know, are confirmed by the totality of contemporary economic, political and historical research. In explicating this tendency of State and nation to coincide, we shall be referred back to the specificity of the nation in the modern sense of the term. For it is precisely here that the failings of previous Marxist investigation are most evident.

First of all, we must consider arguments that seek to base these historical realities on certain economic foundations – of which the most frequently invoked is again the famous realm of the circulation of capital and commodity-exchange. According to such conceptions, economic unity, as the essential element of the modern nation, hinges upon unification of the so-called internal market. The generalization of commodity exchange, and the realization of exchange-value in the circulation of money, require the abolition of customs-duties and other fetters on commodity circulation and monetary union. The State itself works to constitute the modern nation in its economic dimension by homogenizing, under the aegis of commodity capital, the space of the circulation of commodities and capital. Indeed, this is supposed to be the essence of its activity in forging national unity. Here too are located, albeit in a more subtle manner, the roots of the relationship between the modern nation and State, as well as of the peculiarities of the national State. Thus, the State's specific materiality is held to derive from the fact that it establishes the exchangers of commodities and owners of capital as formally free and equal political individuals-subjects; and that it represents-crystallizes the unity of these individuals. The modern nation itself, at least in its economic dimension, is supposed to rest essentially upon the homogenization of the 'people-nation' as the space in which these competing individuals or commodity-traders constantly move. The corresponding class analysis is deduced from the argument that both the nation and the modern State were created by commodity capital in a process going back to the mercantile bourgeoisie of early capitalism.

The above is an only slightly schematized account of such conceptions, which form part of a dominant and extremely tenacious Marxist tradition. However, not only is the explanation very one-sided; it serves to block genuine analysis of the modern nation and carries with it a number of serious consequences.

(a) The generalization of commodity-exchange cannot adequately account for the creation of the modern nation. While it brings out the need for unification of the so-called internal market and for breaking the fetters that impede the circulation of commodities and

capital, *it does nothing to explain why such unification is located at the level of the nation*. By all means let us talk in terms of unification of the internal market. But what defines this notion of ‘internal’? What makes possible the emergence of a specific space whose contours designate an inside and an outside? Why do these limits-frontiers follow this precise demarcation? Indeed, why and how are such limits assigned to a particular field, which becomes the site of the problem of unification? All these questions have to be faced: for homogenization of the internal market presupposes the prior enclosure of precisely that space which has still to be unified.

(b) More generally, this evasive reference to the co-ordinates of commodity-exchange expresses a profoundly empiricist and positivist conception of all the elements that are supposed to constitute the nation: common territory, common language, common historical and cultural tradition. I shall not enter here into the dispute – which has truly shaken the workers movement – over the exact nature of the elements which should be identified as constituting the nation. I am concerned above all to clarify the underlying conception on the basis of which a certain set of elements are usually put forward. In a certain sense, these elements of territory, language and tradition are often understood as transhistorical essences possessing an immutable nature. The emergence of the modern nation and its specific relationship to the State are then considered to be the result of a principle (generalization of commodity-exchange) whose effect is the addition-accumulation of these essences – accumulation which gives rise to an encompassing nation-State. Of course, such an explanation misses the essential problem already posed in connection with the internal market: namely, why and how do territory, historical tradition and language chart, by means of the State, the new configuration that is the modern nation? What makes it possible for these seemingly transhistorical elements to be articulated at the focal point of the modern nation? Why do these elements function in diverse ways as the frontier-signs of the modern nation?

Failure to pose these questions obviously leads to underestimation of the present-day weight of the nation. If territory, language and

historical tradition retain the essence which they had when the nation's role was less important, and if the tendency of capitalism really is towards internationalization of markets and capital, then it would be easy to conclude, together with a number of contemporary writers, that the role of the nation is diminishing in the current phase of transition to capitalism; and it would be easy to underestimate its specific role in the transition to socialism (as is done by a current once dominant within Marxism).

As I have shown elsewhere, the current internationalization of the market and of capital does nothing to reduce the peculiar weight of the nation. This is so because the elements that come into play in the constitution of the modern nation are of quite novel significance. Thus, territory and historico-cultural tradition – to take but two, apparently ‘natural’ elements – acquire a meaning under capitalism that is completely different from the one they assumed in the past. It is this difference which defines the problem of the market as that of the unity of the ‘internal’ market. Furthermore, it produces the uneven development of capitalism as an unevenness of historical moments affecting those differentiated, classified and distinct spaces that are called nations or national social formations. This difference therefore appears as a condition for capitalist development.

I shall argue that territory and tradition now have this quite novel meaning because they are inscribed in the still more fundamental changes of the underlying conceptual matrices of space and time. The fact that capitalist space and time are not at all the same as their counterparts in previous modes of production implies that considerable changes have taken place in the reality and meaning of territory and historicity. These changes both allow and entail the constitution of the modern nation: by mapping out a new organization of the language and a new relationship of the State to territory and historicity, they bring into being the modern nation and the nation State.

I shall refer below to a number of indicators that may be found in the French historians of the *Annales* school.²⁵ However, these points essentially concern the space and (above all) the time of Antiquity

and medieval feudalism: they are not extended to capitalism or related to the constitution of the nation. What is more, they pose more general problems of a theoretical nature.

First, the majority of these historians tend to seek the production of space-time either in the sphere of commodity-exchange ('closed' subsistence societies of the Middle Ages) or in the co-ordinates of technology (the state of technique, inventions, tools) and demography. Most of the time, only a marginal role is assigned to the relations of production and the social division of labour (except in the simplest form of a division between town and country).

Of still greater importance is the fact that these analyses often follow the line of the *history of thinking*. New social production of space and time is regarded as a straightforward transformation of 'the mental framework', 'the view of the world', or 'mental structures' placed on a par with such cultural co-ordinates as religion. Some of these analyses thus converge with those of the culturalist current and with Max Weber's famous study of capitalism and the Protestant Ethic. For its part, Marxist research has up to now also considered that transformations of space and time essentially concern ways of thinking: it assigns a marginal role to such changes on the grounds that they belong to the ideological-cultural domain – to the manner in which societies or classes *represent* space and time. In reality, however, transformations of the spatio-temporal matrices refer to the materiality of the social division of labour, of the structure of the State, and of the practices and techniques of capitalist economic, political and ideological power; they are the *real substratum* of mythical, religious, philosophical or 'experiential' representations of space-time. Just as these changes are not reducible to the representations which they occasion, so they cannot be identified with the scientific concepts of space and time which allow us to grasp them.

As the primary material framework of the institutions and practices of power, these spatio-temporal matrices should also be distinguished from Foucault's 'diagram', which, in its epistemological function, is closely related to the concept of structure employed by structuralism (the diagram immanent in each

power situation). They differ from it in that their foundation lies in the relations of production and social division of labour. Of course, I am not speaking of some mechanical causality according to which pre-existing relations of production give rise at a subsequent stage to spatial and temporal matrices. Themselves implied by the relations of production and social division of labour, these matrices appear at the same time as their presupposition – in the sense that Marx gave to the term *logical priority* (*Voraussetzung*) as opposed to ‘historical preconditions’ (*historische Bedingungen*). Transformations of these matrices thus punctuate changes in the mode of production; and for this very reason, they are present in the material framework of the given State, structuring the modalities in which its power is exercised. The presence of the spatio-temporal matrices in the State does not then refer to a mere relationship of structural homology between State and relations of production. Indeed, the capitalist State has the peculiarity of reserving social space and time for itself: it intervenes in the erection of these matrices by tending to monopolize those procedures of space-time organization which are established through it as networks of domination and power. The modern nation appears as a product of the State, since its constitutive elements (economic unity, territory, tradition) are modified through the State’s direct activity in the material organization of space and time. The modern nation further tends to coincide with the State, since it is actually incorporated by the State and acquires flesh and blood in the state apparatuses: it becomes the anchorage of state power in society and maps out its contours. The capitalist State is functional to the nation.

I. The Spatial Matrix: Territory

In whichever way we approach the problem of space, we become aware that space matrices vary with the mode of production and that they are themselves presupposed by the forms of historico-social appropriation and consumption of space. However, in order to

unravel the secret of these matrices, it is not enough to recapitulate the historical sequence of the forms of appropriation of social space. From the growth of towns through communications, transport and military apparatuses and strategy, to the emergence of borders, limits and territory, we are dealing with so many mechanisms of organizing social space. Now, the attempt to trace the history and transformations of these mechanisms always runs up against the same problem: the historical changes which they undergo are not variations on an intrinsic nature, for these mechanisms have no such nature. Discontinuity is here of decisive significance. Towns, frontiers and territory do not at all possess a single reality and meaning in both capitalism and pre-capitalist modes of production. And even if we manage to avoid the snare of that linear and empirical historiography which seeks to unfold the development of towns, frontiers and territory at a level of their own, we must still face the task of explaining discontinuities.

As we know, the most advanced research in this field currently tends to place these mechanisms of appropriation and consumption of social space in a direct relationship to the specific features of the various modes of production. However, the real problem lies elsewhere; the transformation of these mechanisms is woven into a more intricate web. We are not dealing with different modes of organization, appropriation and consumption of a 'space' that possesses an intrinsic nature, nor with different trajectories and structurings of one and the same space. The here decisive distinction between town and country varies quite profoundly according to the mode of production: not only because the historical co-ordinates modify the two terms of the relationship (the ancient, medieval or modern town and the ancient, feudal, communal or modern countryside) but, more fundamentally, because the relationship is itself inscribed in sites that vary according to the mode of production. If these mechanisms produce space, it is not because they differentially structure or divide up a single space in the process of socially consuming it, but because they concretize the primary, differential space matrices which are already present in

their skeletal structure. The genealogy of the production of space is prior to the history of its appropriation.

Although the spatial matrices of ancient societies and feudal societies differ in important respects, they present a number of common features when we compare them, at our very general level of analysis, with the spatial matrix of capitalism. I shall not return here to the specificity of the pre-capitalist relations of production and social division of labour, in which the direct producer is not yet separated by relations of possession from his means of production, and in which the division of labour does not generate the dissociations peculiar to the capitalist mode of production. Nor shall I discuss the characteristic features of pre-capitalist political power and forms of State. However, these latter do involve a specific space that is *continuous, homogeneous, symmetrical, reversible and open*. The space of Western Antiquity is a space with a *centre*: the *polis* (which itself has a centre: the *agora*). But it has no frontiers in the modern sense of the term. It is concentric, but, having no real outside, it is also open. This centre (the *polis* and *agora*) is inscribed in a space whose essential characteristics are homogeneity and symmetry, not differentiation and hierarchy. Moreover, this geometric orientation is reproduced in the political organization of the city and the 'isonomy' relationship among its citizens.

These spatially diffuse points (the cities) are separated from one another not because they are closed to the outside, but because they are turned in on their own centre – not as links in a chain, but as dispersions in a single place.²⁶ 'Men', writes Gernet, 'order [this centre] at their will. The mathematical disposition of what could be any territory at all, the centre is arbitrary or even purely theoretical.' In this space (which is the one represented by Euclid and the Pythagoreans) people do not change their position, they simply move around. They always go to the same place, because each point in space is an exact repetition of the previous point; when they found colonies, it is only to form replicas of Athens or Rome. Since every trajectory is merely a return to the initial centre, no distance can ever be covered; and since the towns are 'open' to the countryside, there can be no question of a territory with limits

that extend beyond, or fall short of, other segments. The Greeks and Romans do not extend outwards by drawing in their frontiers to include new pieces or portions of space – for what is at stake is not the assimilation of heterogeneous fragments. They simply spread out in a homogeneous field, which, while exhibiting certain delimitations, knows no enclosure in the modern sense of the term. Through every twist and turn, this topographical ordering coincides with the sites of exploitation and the forms of political command: space is homogeneous and undifferentiated because the space of the slave is the same as that of the master; and the points at which power is exercised are replicas of the sovereign's body. In fact, it is this body which unifies space and installs public man within private man: it is a body with no place and no frontiers. All roads lead to Rome in the sense that Rome is at every point of the sovereign's moving around: in the towns, in the countryside, in the fleet, and in the armies. To be sure, although this homogeneous site has no outside, it has confines which are its absolute reverse: namely, the barbarians. But these barbarians are precisely a non-site: not only are they not a segment, however distinct, of a single space, they are the definitive end of all possible space; they are not a division of space but a without-space, not a no-man's-land but a no-land.

Let us now pass on to the feudal system and the Middle Ages. As we said earlier, although the spatial matrices of Antiquity and feudalism exhibit noteworthy differences, they also have certain points in common. These become readily visible on condition that we avoid the simplistic couplet territorialization-deterritorialization which is now the height of fashion in the Deleuze-Guattari School.²⁷ For these authors, feudal personal bonds and the peasant's 'link' with the 'soil' give rise to the territorialization of space and of social relations, while the 'freeing' of the direct producer from these bonds results in the deterritorialization of space under capitalism. In reality, however, these terms cannot keep the same reference through the transformations of the mode of production, since their meaning varies with the spatial matrix: such is the case of the land, which no more possesses an intrinsic nature than do the other means and objects of production. Of course, the personalized

economic-political ties of the feudal countryside and the rights and freedoms peculiar to the towns turn each of these sites in on itself: the walls of medieval towns (which were closed towns, according to Braudel) also marked the limits of freedoms, while feudal links in the countryside tied the producer to the soil. But these were contours inscribed in a spatial matrix which changed relatively little, in keeping with the relations of production and (simple) division of labour of the feudal system.

Here too, we are talking of a homogeneous, continuous, reversible and open space. In point of fact, people have never moved about as much as they did in the Middle Ages: peasant migration, both individual and collective, was a major demographic phenomenon in medieval society. On the road were to be found knights, peasants travelling during the rotation period of crops and fields, merchants, clerics either undertaking a regular trip or running away from their monasteries, students, pilgrims of all kinds, crusaders – it was the great age of the wanderer. Both the towns and feudal demesnes or fiefs were open and turned out, through a number of epicentres, towards that umbilical centre, Jerusalem. As Marx pointed out, the relations of production were such that religion played the dominant role in feudal social formations; it was directly present in the forms of the exercise of power and it patterned space by setting the seal of Christianity upon it. But from the very beginning, this was the matrix of a continuous and homogeneous space. As in Antiquity, people do not change their position: between the fiefs, large villages and towns, on the one hand, and Jerusalem and its diverse earthly incarnations on the other, between the Fall and Salvation, there is no break, fissure or distance. Frontiers and such intermediary points of demarcation as walls, forests and deserts refer not to a distance that has to be crossed in order to pass from one segment to another (one town to another), but to crossroads of a single route. The pilgrim or crusader – which is what every traveller is after a fashion – does not actually go to the holy places and Jerusalem, because these are already inscribed in his body. (This is also the case with Islam.) The body-politic of each sovereign incarnates the unity of this space as the body of Christ-the-King, and space is marked out

by the paths of the Lord. Delimitations are constantly intersecting and overlapping in a series of twists and turns; and subjects, while remaining on the spot, move about in accordance with the changes of the lords and sovereigns to whom they are personally tied. The pyramid of medieval political power has a shifting base like the beam of a movable beacon: all its movement occurs on a surface whose directions are reversible. This explains why the cartography of the Middle Ages is not fundamentally different from that of Antiquity. Here too, what takes the place of territory is a non-place, even though it is unlike that of Antiquity in that it is composed of Unbelievers or Infidels.

The contrast with capitalism is quite evident. But we cannot here recapitulate the historical constitution of capitalist social space. The problem still concerns relations between the strictly capitalist social matrix and the 'Strictly capitalist' relations of production and social division of labour: it is a problem of the role of *territory* in the constitution of the modern nation.

The direct producer, the worker, is now totally separated from the means of labour – a situation which is at the root of the social division of labour in machine production and large-scale industry. The latter involves as its precondition an entirely different spatial matrix: *the serial, fractured, parcelled, cellular and irreversible* space which is peculiar to the Taylorist division of labour on the factory assembly line. Although this space also becomes homogeneous in the end, it does so only through a second-degree and problematic homogenization, which arises on the basis of its essential segmentations and gaps. Already at this level, the matrix space has a twofold dimension: it is composed of gaps, breaks, successive fracturings, closures and frontiers; but it has no end: the capitalist labour process tends towards world-wide application (expanded co-operation). It may be said that the separation of the direct producer from his means of labour and his liberation from personal bonds involve a process of deterritorialization. But the naturalist image peddled by this term is no more exact in this context than it is elsewhere. The whole process is inscribed in a fresh space, which precisely involves closures and successive segmentations. In this

modern space, people change position *ad infinitum* by traversing separations in which each place is defined by its distance from others; they spread out in this space by assimilating and homogenizing new segments in the act of shifting their frontiers.

Now, it is not the shifting of frontiers that is important, but the appearance of *frontiers in the modern sense of the term*: that is to say, limits capable of being shifted along a serial and discontinuous loom which everywhere fixes *insides* and *outsides*. Within this very space are inscribed the movements and expanded reproduction of capital, the generalization of exchange, and monetary fluctuations. While these constantly stretch towards the outside, they have to cross frontiers of a serial and discontinuous space rooted in the social division of the labour processes. Implicit in the capitalist relations of production – economic ownership and possession of the means of production by capital – this space appears as the splitting of the labour process into capitalist units of production and reproduction. The uneven development of capitalism is, in its spatialized dimension, actually consubstantial with this discontinuous morphology; the expansion of capital consubstantial with this irreversibly oriented topology; and modern imperialism consubstantial with those spatial frontiers. *The first fruits of territory, considered as a constitutive element of the modern nation, are written into this capitalist spatial matrix.*

It must be made clear, however, that this national territory has nothing to do with the natural features of the land. It is rather of an essentially political character, in that the State tends to monopolize the procedures of the organization of space. The modern State materializes this spatial matrix in its various apparatuses (army, school, centralized bureaucracy, prison system), patterning in turn the subjects over whom it exercises power. The individualization of the body-politic – as an ensemble of identical monads separated from the State – rests on the state framework that is inscribed in the spatial matrix implied by the labour process. Modern individuals are the components of the modern nation-State: the people-nation of the capitalist State is the content of a space whose frontiers are the pertinent contours of the material bases of power. The segmented

chain of such individualized sites traces the interior of national territory as a state patterning of the exercise of power. In fact, the national territory is but the political expression of an enclosure at the level of the State as a whole; and towns become those ‘well-kept’ and ‘disciplined’ towns to which Braudel refers. The direct producers are freed from the soil only to become trapped in a grid – one that includes not only the factory but also the modern family, the school, the army, the prison system, the city and the national territory. We may verify this by looking at the modalities through which the capitalist State exercises power. Thus, *concentration camps* are a peculiarly modern invention, because, among other reasons, both they and the national territory concretize the same spatial power matrix. Camps are the form of shutting up non-nationals (or, more precisely, ‘anti-nationals’) within the national territory. They internalize the frontiers of the national space at the heart of that space itself, thus making possible the modern notion of ‘internal enemy’. The exact configuration and topography followed by this territory will, of course, depend on a whole series of historical factors (economic, political, linguistic and so on). But what matters here is the appearance of territory and frontiers in the modern sense of the terms. The territory becomes national and, by means of the State, constitutes an element of the modern nation.

In order to grasp this second proposition, we must take account of the fact that territory is only one element of the modern nation and of the capitalist State’s relationship to historical tradition and language. For the moment, let us note that while this serial, discontinuous and segmented space-territory implies the existence of frontiers, it also poses the new problem of its own *homogenization* and *unification*. *Here too the State plays a role in forging national unity*. Frontiers and national territory do not exist prior to the unification of that which they structure: there is no original something-inside that has later to be unified. The capitalist State does not confine itself to perfecting national unity, but sets itself up in constructing this unity – that is, in forging the modern nation. The State marks out the frontiers of this serial space in the very process of unifying and homogenizing what these frontiers enclose. It is in this way that

the territory becomes national, tending to merge with the nation-State. It is in this way too that the nation tends to encapsulate the State: it either embraces the existing State *or* sets itself up as the autonomous State of a modern nation by creating a State of its own. (*Jacobinism* and *separatism* are thus two aspects of the same phenomenon: the peculiar relationship between the modern nation and the State.) The national State realizes the unity of the individuals of the people-nation in the very movement by which it forges their individualization. It secures the political-public (nation-State) homogenization of the 'private' dissociations in the very movement by which it contributes to their establishment; law thus becomes the expression of national law and sovereignty. The State does not have to unify a pre-existing 'internal' market, but installs a unified national market by marking out the frontiers of what thereby becomes the inside of an outside. We can follow this process in the totality of state apparatuses (economic, military, educational, and so on) and thus find an initial, and no doubt partial, answer to a problem that would otherwise be insoluble. Pierre Vilar has given the best formulation of this problem: why are national social formations the principal roots and focal points of the uneven development of capitalism?²⁸

Now, through that very movement by which it both marks out frontiers and unifies national space, the State also turns beyond those frontiers towards an irreversible, clearly demarcated space which yet has no end or final horizon. In other words, it seeks to expand markets, capital and territory. For to mark out frontiers involves the possibility of redrawing them: there is no way of advancing in this spatial matrix except along the road of homogenization, assimilation and unification – except through demarcation of an interior that is always capable of being extended *ad infinitum*. These frontiers therefore become established as frontiers of the national territory only from the moment when capital and commodities are in a position to break through them. It is not possible to move in this space without crossing frontiers: imperialism is consubstantial with the modern nation in the sense that it cannot be other than *internationalization*, or rather

transnationalization, of the processes of labour and capital. This spatial matrix is rooted in the labour process and social division of labour. As Marx said, capital is a relationship between capital and labour; and it is because it moves in the *international* spatial matrix of the labour and exploitation processes that capital can reproduce itself only through *transnationalization* – however deterritorialized and a-national its various forms may appear to be.

Thus, the tendency of the modern State to expand *ad infinitum* – which is itself one with the process of establishing national unity – cannot but encapsulate a shift in frontiers involving assimilation and homogenization. Modern conquest has a meaning quite different from that of the past: it no longer denotes spreading through, and unity with, a continuous and homogeneous space, but rather expanding through and filling in breaches. In other words, the national State now homogenizes differences, crushes various nationalities ‘within’ the frontiers of the nation-State, and wears away the rugged features of the land that is included in the national territory. *Genocide* is also a modern invention bound up with the spatialization peculiar to nation-States – a form of extermination specific to the establishment or cleaning up of the national territory by means of homogenizing enclosure. Pre-capitalist expansion and conquest neither assimilated nor digested: the Greeks and the Romans, Islam and the Crusaders, Attila and Tamerlane all killed in order to clear a path in an open, continuous and already homogeneous space; that accounts for the undifferentiated massacres which marked the exercise of power in the great nomadic empires. Genocide becomes possible only when the national space is closed on *foreign* bodies within its very frontiers. Is this a symbolic image? Well, the first genocide of this century, that of the Armenians, accompanies precisely Kemal Ataturk’s foundation of the Turkish nation-State, the establishment of a national territory on the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, and the *closure* of the Golden Horn. Genocide and concentration camps are inscribed in one and the same space.

Here too, we can see the roots of that peculiarly modern phenomenon, *totalitarianism*: separation and division in order to

unify; parcelling out in order to structure; atomization in order to encompass; segmentation in order to totalize; closure in order to homogenize; and individualization in order to obliterate differences and otherness. The roots of totalitarianism are inscribed in the spatial matrix concretized by the modern nation-State – a matrix that is already present in its relations of production and in the capitalist social division of labour.

II. The Temporal Matrix and Historicity: Tradition

The second element which enters into the constitution of the modern nation is generally designated by the term ‘common historical tradition’. I shall deal with this more rapidly. Historians have analysed in greater depth the transformations of the temporal matrix and of the notion of historicity. Here too, the principal question concerns the association between these transformations and changes in the relations of production and social division of labour. Tradition is not at all the same in pre-capitalist and capitalist societies: it has neither the same meaning nor the same function.

The temporal matrix of Antiquity evidently differs from that of medieval feudalism, but the two also have basic features in common. In both these societies, the means of production are still possessed by the direct producer and there is no capitalist division of labour; they crystallize modes of production (grounded on slavery or serfdom) *which know only simple reproduction and not that expanded reproduction* peculiar to the capitalist mode. No doubt their temporal matrices are those of *plural and singular times*. But each of these times is itself *continuous, homogeneous, reversible and repetitive*. Whether agricultural, civil and political, military, aristocratic, or clerical, these multiple times exhibit the same matrix characteristics. Being essentially fluid, they have no universal measure: for they are

not strictly speaking *measurable*, given that measure can only encode gaps between segments. Although specific sequences do show up in this homogeneous temporal continuum and although privileged moments make their appearance – for we are not talking of the linear descent of primitive societies – nevertheless, they are basically at the mercy of ‘chance’ (Antiquity) or of the presence of eternity (medieval Christianity). There is no succession or series: indeed there are no events. These are times of *the present*, which itself gives to the *before* and the *after* their respective meanings. In the societies of Antiquity, time is largely the circular time of eternal recurrence: the past is always reproduced in the present, which is nothing but its echo; and the journey back through time does not lead us away from the present, since the past is an integral part of the Cosmos. To remember through *anamnesis* is to find again other regions of being – the essence that is manifested by the here-and-now. In this homogeneous, reversible and continuous time, the present is included in the origins, chronology remaining a repetition of the genesis, if not actually a genealogical transfer. Rediscovering the origins is not the same as to recapitulate the history of an accumulation (of experiences, knowledge, events) or of a progression towards the present; it rather involves the attainment of original omniscience. It is not that a future dimension is absent. But although the *telos* of the Pythagoreans halts the spiral of freshly-begun cycles, it does so by looping the loop, by knitting both ends together.

Things are not basically different in medieval feudalism. Over and above the dependence of temporalities on the ‘natural time’ peculiar to essentially agrarian societies (seasons, work in the fields, and so on), what matters is the temporal matrix underlying the agricultural, artisan, military or clerical times that appear as so many singular times. While each of these involves certain datings, the various chronologies are not ordered throughout times that are divisible into equal segments; and nor do the various moments have a numerical frame of reference. These chronologies refer instead to a continuous time which, placed under the aegis of religion, appears as a time of eternity punctuated by second meanings, acts of piety,

and belfry-chimes inserted into the rhythm of the mass. Rooted in this temporal matrix, a linear materiality of time does, of course, come forth as distinct from the cyclical materiality of Antiquity: history now has a beginning and an end, located between the Creation and the Last Judgement. But it is still a present time: beginning and end, *before* and *after* are fully *co-present* in the constant essence of the Divine. Whether it is a question of immutable truth or of progressively revealed truth, and whether individual salvation is predetermined or not, all that is ever involved is a repetition or bringing-up-to-date of the origins. Here where the irreversibility of time is a mere illusion, to reach for the end is always to regain the beginning.

These temporal matrices are present in the forms and techniques of pre-capitalist political power as it is transferred from the body of the sovereign. This body-politic does not make history, it bathes in a continuous and homogeneous historicity of which the subjects of power partake in the process of transferring that body. If the succession of sovereigns is conceived as a series of events, then, strictly speaking, there is no such thing; there is just the circulation by transference of an uninterrupted power, the re-concretization of the past: *translatio imperii*. This history-recollection is never anything but an unfolding of genealogies – those of divinities, heroes or dynasties; and this time, the representation of history takes place in the mode of the chronical. The past is not separated from the present by a gap, but spreads through it like an echo; while, in its turn, the present is but an unceasing herald of that future which will meet up with the beginnings. Here history is not made, it is commemorated.

This political history cannot have constitutive relations with territory in the modern sense of the term, because the territory-frontier does not yet exist. Moreover, pre-capitalist spatial matrices have the same foundation as the pre-capitalist temporal matrices: political historicity is transferred from the body of the sovereign, who is not himself sovereign of a territory-frontier. Indeed, there is neither historicity nor territory in its modern form: pre-capitalist territories have no historicity of their own, since political time is the

time of the prince-body, who is capable of extension, contraction, and movement in a continuous and homogeneous space. In other words, the peculiar features of the spatial and temporal matrices of a mode of production, which are implied by the prevailing relations of production and social division of labour, determine the relations which these matrices sustain between each other. This fact is designated by a binomial term that is itself a problem rather than a solution: namely, 'space-time'.

The capitalist temporal matrix is entirely different, being the precondition of the new relations of production and consubstantial with the capitalist social division of labour. Machine production, large-scale industry and assembly-line labour entail a *segmented, serial, equally divided, cumulative and irreversible time that is oriented towards the product* and, thereby, towards expanded reproduction and capital accumulation: in short, a production process which has an orientation and a goal but no fixed limit. This time is measurable and susceptible to strict control by means of clocks, foremen's stop-watches, clocking-on machines and calendars. But on account of its segmentation and serialization, it raises the fresh problem of unification and universalization: how to master time by means of a single, homogeneous measure, which only reduces the multiple temporalities (workers' time and bourgeois time, the time of the economic, the social, and the political) by encoding the distances between them. However, each temporality expresses the characteristics of one and the same matrix: indeed (and this is what escapes many authors who stress the 'universalization' of capitalist time) this temporal matrix for the first time marks out the particular temporalities as *differential temporalities* – that is to say, as rhythmical and metrical variations of a serial, segmented, irreversible and cumulative time. The moments of this time follow one another in a series and are totalized in a result: the present now marks a transition from the before to the after. Modern historicity is thus of an evolutionary and progressive character; it refers to a time which is constituted to the very extent that it runs through itself, each moment producing the next in an irreversible sequence or

series of events opening towards a future that is ever being recreated.

Before returning to the nation-State, I shall make a short digression. We are dealing here with the material matrix of capitalist time, not with its representation. This matrix gave rise to theoretico-ideological representations of time and history and, in particular, to the theorization of time in the philosophy of history (which is born as such in bourgeois society) and the so-called human sciences. Now this raises a twofold problem.

1. Although this temporal matrix of capitalism engenders the diverse ideological representations of History – the unilinear, evolutionist, progressive and teleological historicity of bourgeois philosophy of History – it also allows *a scientific concept of history to be constructed* for the first time. This was in fact accomplished by Marx as well as by numerous modern historians. We can already see the well-known problem that arises at this point: an epistemological field grounded on a determinate historico-social materiality (in this case, the temporal matrix implicit in capitalist relations of production) allows the emergence of scientific elements of knowledge which, precisely as such, transcend the given field. Thus, capitalism made possible the constitution of a science of history that is not confined to knowledge of capitalism alone. Marxism is not the only theory of capitalism, any more than psychoanalysis is the only theory of the unconscious in capitalist society. For the elements and object of science are not reducible to their conditions of possibility and constitution, whatever these may be. Why then is it precisely capitalism, founded as it is on the extraction of surplus-value, which allowed the scientific concept of history to be constructed? This question has been dealt with many times and I shall not tackle it once again. It does seem to me, however, that it requires us to pay closer attention to the role of the temporal matrix of capitalism (in the sense given above) as the precondition of any possible science of history. This being said, just as I shall not discuss the theoretico-ideological representations of History, so I shall deal not with the scientific concept of history, but with the materiality of this temporal matrix.

2. The concept and object of history-as-science (of Marxism) are like those of any science in that their field of validity is not rigidly circumscribed by the conditions of their historical emergence. For they are not reducible to the surrounding ideological representations (to the philosophy of History, from the Enlightenment to Hegel), which yet have the same conditions and thus form part of the same epistemological configuration. But we are also now aware of the fact that *the break between science and ideology is far from possessing the radical character that we ascribed to it some years ago*. The theory of history of Marx's 'maturity' even shares certain elements with the ideological-philosophical representation of History current in his age. The penetration of the capitalist social matrix by eschatological evolutionism, rationalistic progressivism, univocal linearity, humanist historicism and I know not what else does not affect merely the fringes of the 'kernel' of Marx's theory, and nor is it a simple deviation or deformation introduced by the epigones of the Second and Third Internationals. It is present in Marx's theory of history itself.

How then did Marx manage to construct his theory of history, starting as he did from the epistemological field of his time? How indeed can we disentangle within his theory itself, the functioning and articulation of the science of history from these ideological representations?

For there is a problem, and a serious one at that. Of course, it does not exist either for the contemporary 'new philosophers', who see in Marx a mere replica of Enlightenment rationalism and positivism; or for Foucault, who reduces the validity, object and field of every science to its given conditions of emergence (in this latter case, reducing Marxism to determinate modalities of the exercise of power: namely, to those disciplines with which he replaces 'conditions'). Lastly, we should mention the licensed guardians of Marxist dogma who refuse to see that there is any problem with Marx's theory itself.

Let us now return to our problem. The capitalist temporal matrix – that segmented, serial and divided time – is already implicit in the peculiar institutional structure of the State and its various

apparatuses (army, school, bureaucracy, prison). The modern State also concretizes this matrix in the process of moulding the subjects over whom power is exercised, and in the techniques of exercising power themselves, especially the procedures whereby the people-nation is individualized. Now this segmented, serial and divided time raises the new problem of its *unification*: once again, the essential role will fall to the State. The modern State must ensure its mastery and control of time by setting down the norm and the standard of measurement, or, in other words, the frame of reference of the variations of particular temporalities. The State regulates what is fast or slow in relation to the standard, and structures the various discrepancies. The uneven development of capitalism fastens on to those stoppages that are the diverse state formations; the rhythm of uneven development peculiar to each formation (in the economic, the political and the ideological, and among all three) fastens on to the moments of the State. The State unifies the sectors of the capitalist formation in the further sense that it is the code of their irregular movements. The capitalist social formation or nation-State is also a process homogenized by the State.

We can now grasp the new meaning of historical tradition in the constitution of the modern nation; the relationship of this tradition to the State; and the fact that the nation tends to coincide with the modern State in the dual sense mentioned above: it merges with the existing State *or* sets itself up as an autonomous State and constitutes the modern nation by creating its own State. (Here too, Jacobinism and separatism are two aspects of a single reality: the peculiar relationship of the modern nation to the State.) 'Tradition' does not at all have the sense that it had in pre-capitalist societies, for *before* and *after* are here located in quite different matrices. The historical present is but a transition between the before and the after; the past is not co-present with the here-and-now, but refers to cumulative slices pointed towards what becomes a new meaning of the future. Tradition is no longer the commemoration of a past which includes the after: it is no longer the truth of that reversible historicity oriented towards the great beginning which is but a repetition and resumption of the origins. Tradition becomes that

which speeds up or that which slows down, encapsulating a succession of moments which produce an irreversible history punctuated by the State. The modern State concentrates the unity of these historical moments and the direction of their sequence: it itself has no original legitimacy in the body of a sovereign, but is successively grounded on the people-nation, whose destiny it represents.

This State realizes a movement of individualization and unification; constitutes the people-nation in the further sense of representing its historical orientation; and assigns a goal to it, marking out what becomes a path. In this oriented historicity without a fixed limit, the State represents an eternity that it produces by self-generation. It organizes the forward course of the nation and thus tends to monopolize the national tradition by making it the moment of a becoming designated by itself, and by storing up the memory of the people-nation. In the capitalist era, a nation without a State of its own is in the course of losing its tradition and history; for the modern nation-State also involves eradication of the traditions, histories and memories of dominated nations involved in its process. This is how we should understand Engels' (undoubtedly ambiguous) remarks, according to which nations without a State of their own become, in the capitalist era, 'peoples without a history'.²⁹ The State establishes the modern nation by eliminating other national pasts and turning them into variations of its own history: modern imperialism, too, involves homogenization of temporal sequences and assimilation of histories by the nation-State. The modern demands for national autonomy and a national State are equivalent, within capitalist historicity, to demands for a national history.

To be sure, *the State is not the subject of real history*: for this is a process without a subject, the process of the class struggle. But we can now understand why the modern nation-States constitute the focal-points and basic moments of that real history, even though it is capable of extension at a world level; and why the history of the international proletariat is segmented and punctuated by the histories of national working classes. This situation depends not on

ideological mechanisms but on the role of these nation-States in the material organization of capitalist historicity. Here too lie the roots of the peculiarly modern phenomenon of totalitarianism: the mastery and unification of time through establishing it as an instrument of power; the totalization of historicities through obliteration of their differences; the serialization and segmentation of the various moments so that they may be oriented and stored up; the homogenization of the people-nation by forging or eliminating the national pasts. The premisses of modern totalitarianism exist in the temporal matrix which is inscribed in the modern State and which is already implied by capitalist relations of production and social division of labour.

This becomes still clearer if we bear in mind that the State establishes the peculiar relationship between *history* and *territory*, between the spatial and the temporal matrix. In fact, the modern nation makes possible the intersection of these matrices and thus serves as their point of junction; the capitalist State marks out the frontiers when it constitutes what is within (the people-nation) by homogenizing the before and the after of the content of this enclosure. National unity or the modern unity thereby becomes *historicity of a territory and territorialization of a history* – in short, a territorial national tradition concretized in the nation-State; the markings of a territory become indicators of history that are written into the State. The enclosures implicit in the constitution of the modern people-nation are only so awesome because they are also fragments of a history that is totalized and capitalized by the State. Genocide is the elimination of what become ‘foreign bodies’ of the national history and territory: it expels them beyond space and time. The great confinement only comes to pass because it is at the same time the fragmentation and the unification of a serial and segmented time: concentration camps are a modern invention in the additional sense that the frontier-gates close on ‘anti-nationals’ for whom time and national historicity are in *suspense*. In the modern era, demands for a national State are demands for a territory and history of one’s own. The premisses of modern totalitarianism exist not only in the spatial and temporal matrices incarnated in the

modern State, but also, or above all, in the relationship between the two that is concentrated by the State.

Lastly, the constitution of the modern nation should be located in the relationship between the modern State and *language*. Here we can merely point out that the construction of a national language by the modern State is reducible neither to the problem of its social and political usage, nor to the State's positing of linguistic norms and regulations, nor to the consequent destruction of dominated languages within the nation-State. The very structure of the national language is profoundly reorganized by the State: the relationship of language to the capitalist spatial and temporal matrices is restructured insofar as it is cast in the mould of a State which crystallizes intellectual labour in its specifically capitalist separation from manual labour. Thus, the role of a common language in constituting the modern nation does not refer to a process whereby the State takes over a language, causing it to suffer purely instrumental distortions; it denotes the very *re-creation* of language by the State. The linguistic imperialism peculiar to the officialese of a modern nation does not result merely from the forms of its employment; it is already present in its structuring.

III. The Nation and Classes

As in the preceding cases, we now have to grasp the articulation of these analyses with an analysis of the nation in terms of class struggle.

Here too, there is no question of two distinct approaches dealing with substantively heterogeneous objects. The spatial and temporal matrices are presuppositions of the relations of production only because they are concretized in them as class struggle: they appear historically as the product of this struggle. In this aspect, however, they are not the product of a class acting as subject of history. They are the result of a process, since history itself is the process of the class struggle. The modern nation is not then the creation of the

bourgeoisie, but the outcome of a *relationship* of forces between the ‘modern’ social classes – one in which the nation is a *stake* for the various classes.

At this point, there arises a second problem. The concrete configuration of a particular nation and a particular State, as well as the forms of their inter-relationship, depend on the historical peculiarities of the class-struggle process and of the class relationship of forces. They appear as so many variants of the modern nation and State – and thus of their spatial and temporal matrices – as long as we understand that in no case is there ever really a pre-existing essence differentiated only in its particular manifestations; and that there can be no question of an ideal type which is concretized in various ways. Just like the modern State and nation, these matrices exist only insofar as they are concretized in specific formations. If these formations and class-struggle processes have something in common (the same spatio-temporal matrix) it is because, until the point of rupture, they are situated on the terrain of a single mode of production, whose modifications are so many moments of its own expanded reproduction.

Thus, not only do these spatial and temporal matrices, like the modern nation, vary in *significance* according to the specific class struggles; they exist as so many variants in the differential class practices. There is a bourgeois spatiality and historicity, and there is a working-class spatiality and historicity. And yet they are variants of a single matrix, because the latter appears as the historical result of the class-struggle process and the relationship of forces, and because this process is truly a process of struggle in a *capitalist* society. To be sure, the relations of production and social division of labour make of the working class (in a commonly expressed formulation) the ‘bearer’ of positivity and of the historical future. Already under capitalism, its practices bear what appear as the ‘seeds’ of other social relations, other spatial and temporal matrices, another nation; and history always moves forward on the side of the working class. But I have in mind a different problem: the struggle of the working class does not unfold in an airtight chamber, but exists only as a term of the relationship between the working class

and the bourgeoisie. The history of the working class is the history of its struggle against the bourgeoisie: to adopt the viewpoint of the working class is to adopt the viewpoint of its struggle against the bourgeoisie.

We are now in a position to explain, first of all, the constitutive relationship between each bourgeoisie and the nation. It is a relationship which follows, on the one hand, the rhythms and phases of the accumulation and expanded reproduction of capital, and on the other hand, the broad outline of changes in the policy of the bourgeoisie. The modern nation bears the stamp of the development of the bourgeoisie and of relations among its various fractions. This affects both the transition to capitalism within the process of primitive capital accumulation *and* the role of the merchant bourgeoisie in the formation of the nation; both the stage of competitive capitalism *and* the stage of imperialism (including its current phase of internationalization of capital). The transformations of capitalist relations of production leave their mark on transformations of the nation and of bourgeois nationalism. Now, even in the current phase characterized by internationalization of capital, the (no doubt altered) modern nation remains for the bourgeoisie the focal point of its own reproduction – reproduction which takes the precise form of internationalization or transnationalization of capital. This hard core of the modern nation is to be found in the unchanging kernel of the *capitalist* relations of production.

The bourgeoisie's relationship to the nation varies according to the fraction concerned (national bourgeoisie, internationalized bourgeoisie, domestic bourgeoisie); it is itself established by the mediation of the State. Now, *this State is not just any State*: it has a class nature and, *qua* bourgeois, it constitutes the bourgeoisie as the dominant class. But here again, there are not two States: a first, pre-class State, organizing the modern nation prior to the nation's relationship with the bourgeoisie; and a second, bourgeois-class State, superimposed on the first and committed to recovering the nation for the profit of the bourgeoisie. By grounding this State and the modern nation on the relations of production and social division

of labour, we show that the State possesses a materiality of its own and, thus, a specific class nature. It is precisely a national State that is a bourgeois State – and not simply because the bourgeoisie makes use of it to turn the nation to its own advantage, but because the modern nation, the national State and the bourgeoisie are all constituted on, and have their mutual relations determined by, one and the same terrain. There can be no doubt that bourgeois policy vis-à-vis the nation is subject to the hazards of its particular interests: indeed, the history of the bourgeoisie is one of continual oscillation between identification with and betrayal of the nation. For the nation does not have the same meaning for the bourgeoisie as it does for the working-class and popular masses. Nevertheless, the modern nation is not something that the bourgeoisie can at will allow 'its' State to cast aside or re-establish. The modern nation is written into the State, and it is this national State which organizes the bourgeoisie as the dominant class.

The real problem, of course, concerns the relationship between the working class and the modern nation. This profound relationship has to a large extent been underestimated by Marxism, which has continually tended to examine it either by exclusively referring to the ideological domination of the bourgeoisie (as was the case above all of the Third International) or by referring to the participation of each working class in the national culture (Austro-Marxism). Now, the ideological impact of bourgeois nationalism on the working class is not itself in any doubt, but it is by no means the only aspect of the problem.

Although the existence and diverse practices of the working class already presage the historical supersession of the modern nation, they cannot under capitalism take shape except as workers' variants of that nation. The spatiality and historicity of each working class are a variant of its own nation, both because they are caught in the spatial and temporal matrices and because they form an integral part of that nation understood as a result of the relationship of forces between working class and bourgeoisie. Only insofar as there are national working classes can there be internationalization of the working class and, hence, working-class internationalism: we are

now beginning to grasp this proposition, which should be understood in a quite radical sense. Internationalism and internationalization of the working class do not refer to an original supra-national or a-national essence, subsequently assuming national forms or being simply concretized in national specificities. The capitalist labour process, which entails expanded cooperation (internationalization of the working class), presupposes national materiality and defines the objective bases of such cooperation as working-class *internationalism*. The present tendency of the labour process and social division of labour to extend throughout the world, as well as that of capital to be articulated in this movement, are never anything other than processes of internationalization or transnationalization. Only *a national transition to socialism* is possible: not in the sense of a universal model simply adapted to national particularities, but in the sense of a multiplicity of original roads to socialism, whose general principles, drawn from the theory and experience of the workers' movement, cannot be more than signs on the road.

We are now touching on fundamental, and therefore formidable, political problems. These concern long-standing organizational forms of the workers' movement: namely, the working-class Internationals which, founded on a major underestimation of national reality, all led in practice to the reproduction of national oppression and domination at the very heart of the workers' movement. But they also concern the political position of the Third International and 'orthodox Marxism' concerning the national question: in the best of cases (Lenin), the right to national self-determination is still recognized, but as a right that should be supported only when it conforms to the interests of the 'international proletariat'. This is a profoundly instrumental conception of the nation, which, by neglecting national materiality, has contributed to all the abuses with which we are familiar; it supposes the prior existence of a substantialized international proletariat and therefore raises the question: *who* will define its interests, who will best exhibit its essence and be able to speak in its name? (The common answer is: its vanguard section which has

given reality to its essence – Revolution.) But the question cannot but lead to abuses, above all because the terms in which it is posed are false.

Furthermore, the State that plays a decisive role in organizing the modern nation is not itself an essence: neither the subject of history nor a mere instrument-object of the dominant class, it is, from the point of view of its class nature, the condensation of a class relationship of forces. The territory and history crystallized by the State ratify the dominance of the bourgeois variant of the spatio-temporal matrix over its working-class variant; the dominance of bourgeois over working-class historicity. But without being reabsorbed into the State, working-class history sets its seal on precisely the national aspect of the State. In its institutional structure, the State is also the result of the national process of class struggle – that is to say, both the struggle of the bourgeoisie against the working class, and the struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie. Just like the national culture, history or language, the State is a strategic field ploughed from one end to the other by working-class and popular struggle and resistance; these are inscribed in the State, albeit in a deformed manner, and they always break into it through the wall of silence with which the State hems in the workers' memory. To set the national State as the prize and objective of workers' struggles involves the reappropriation by the working class of its own history. To be sure, this cannot be achieved without a transformation of the State; but it also points to a certain permanency of the State, in its national aspect, during the transition to socialism – permanency not just in the sense of a regrettable survival, but also in that of a positive necessity for the transition to socialism.

These remarks are far from exhausting the problem. Numerous questions remain, concerning: (a) the quite specific relationship to the nation maintained by the other social classes of a capitalist formation (the old and new petty bourgeoisie, the peasant classes) and by social categories such as the state bureaucracy; (b) the concrete political meaning of the nation for the working class and its struggle (according to the stage and phase of capitalism, as well

as to the precise character of the conjuncture) and, in particular, the crucial role played during the current phase of imperialism by the struggle for national independence in the dominant countries, and by the national liberation struggle in the dominated countries; (c) national working-class ideology, both as a correct expression of internationalism and in terms of the impact of bourgeois nationalism on the working class: bourgeois nationalism could not have had such an enormous impact on the working class (leading it into the bloodbaths of national-imperialist wars), unless it rested on the materiality of the constitution and struggles of the working class, and unless it was linked to the genuinely working-class aspect of national ideology.

I shall not go into these questions any further: the previous observations indicate the path along which they should be considered. They allow us to explain the remarkable endurance and resistance of the modern nation throughout all the changes in the systems of organization of political space. Given its roots in material matrices, the modern nation can be transcended only through radical subversion of the relations of production and social division of labour that gave rise to these matrices. This helps us to account for the forms assumed by the national question in the East. It is not that the nation can, or should, be abolished under socialism. But the prodigious forms of national *oppression* that mark both relations among these countries (the USSR and the people's democracies) and each of these countries separately (oppression of national minorities) cannot but refer us back, in a partial yet fundamental sense, to the 'capitalist aspects' of their relations of production, of their social division of labour, and of their States themselves.

²⁴ See among others the works by Georges Haupt, Michael Löwy, M. Reberious, Maxime Rodinson and Pierre Vilar.

²⁵ L. Febvre, *La terre et l'évolution humaine*, 1922; P. Lévêque and P. Vidal-Naquet, *Clisthène l'Athénien*, 1964; P. Lévêque, *L'aventure grecque*, 1964; J.-P. Vernant, *Mythe et pensée chez les Grecs*, 1974; J. Le Goff, *La civilisation de l'Occident médiéval*, 1972; R. Mandrou, *Introduction à la France moderne*, 1961; F. Braudel, *Capitalism and Material*

Life, London 1975; the work of the review *Hérodote*; and the book by François Chatelet, *La naissance de l'histoire*, Paris 1975.

²⁶ M. Serres, 'Discours et parcours', in *Critique* April 1975.

²⁷ *L'anti-Oedipe*, op. cit., pp. 239ff.

²⁸ In his contribution to the collective work, *Faire l'Histoire*, Vol. 1 (ed. J. Le Goff and P. Nora), 1974.

²⁹ 'Die Polendebatte in Frankfurt', in *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, 3 September 1848. *Aus dem literarischen Nachlass von K. Marx, Fr. Engels und F. Lassalle* (ed. Franz Mehring) 1902, vol. III, p. 238.

Part Two

Political struggles: The State as the Condensation of a Relationship of Forces

In Part One, we saw the necessity of relating the state institutional structure to the capitalist relations of production and social division of labour. In this way, the State has already been initially brought into relation with social classes and the class struggle.

I shall now develop this latter point by making an analysis of the State in terms of *political domination* and *political struggle*. A theory of the capitalist State cannot construct its object if reference is made only to the relations of production, and if class struggle in the social formations intervenes merely as a factor of variation whereby an ideo-typical State takes shape in a given concrete State. Although such a theory cannot just draw or retrace the genealogy of the capitalist State, it nevertheless becomes possible only if it accounts for the historical reproduction of that State: the forms corresponding to the various stages or phases of capitalism (liberal State, interventionist State, present-day authoritarian statism), the exceptional forms of State (fascism, military dictatorship, Bonapartism), as well as the forms assumed by the diverse regimes. A theory of the capitalist State must be able to elucidate the metamorphoses of its object.

This brings us first of all to changes in the relations of production. In situating the State vis-à-vis the relations of production, we can already make the following observation: changes in the fundamental periodization of the State (the stages and phases of capitalism: competitive, imperialist-monopoly capitalist and the phases of the latter) refer to substantive changes in the capitalist relations of

production and social division of labour. While their hard core persists, and while they therefore remain capitalist, they nevertheless undergo important changes throughout the reproduction of capitalism.

However, these transformations already entail changes in the constitution and reproduction of social classes, the class struggle, and political domination. The terrain of political domination undergoes important modifications according to the stage and phase of capitalism that makes up the basic periodization of the State; and it also varies with the precise form and regime assumed by the State within each stage or phase: be it a particular form of parliamentarianism, or of presidential rule, fascism or military dictatorship. Class relations are therefore simultaneously present in transformations of the State corresponding to the stages and phases of capitalism (and in changes of the relations of production and social division of labour implied therein), and in the differential forms assumed by the State in a stage or phase marked by those relations of production.

Thus, the problem facing us is to construct a theory of the capitalist State which, starting from the relations of production, will explain *in terms of the very structure of its object* the State's differential reproduction as a function of the class struggle. I stress these points so insistently, because formalist theoreticism can take several forms in the theory of the State. So far we have rejected the approach which seeks to construct the object of the theory of the capitalist State by relating it purely and simply to the relations of production in the sense of an economic structure; and for which the class struggle and political domination enter into the picture only when it comes to explaining the secondary peculiarities-concretizations assumed by the State in historical reality. Such a conception leads to neglect of the specific forms of the State.

However, formalist theoreticism may take a different form, which yet has the same outcome. Of special interest to us here, since it concerns the relationship of the State to political domination, this form treats the general propositions of the Marxist classics as a 'General Theory' (the 'Marxist-Leninist' theory) of the State,

reducing the capitalist State to a mere concretization of ‘the State in general’. With respect to political domination, this results in little more than the following kind of dogmatic banality: every State is a class State; all political domination is a species of class dictatorship; the capitalist State is a State of the bourgeoisie. During the debate in the PCF on the dictatorship of the proletariat, such arguments were reasserted by some of those who supported ‘retaining’ this notion – most notably, by Balibar in his *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*.¹

Obviously such an analysis is incapable of advancing research by a single inch. It is completely unserviceable in analysing concrete situations, since it cannot account for the differential forms and historical transformations of the capitalist State except by the ‘tweedledum and tweedledee’ kind of observation.

The failings of this analysis have incalculable political consequences: at once the result and the concomitant effect of Stalinist simplification-dogmatization on the State, it has led to a number of political disasters, especially in the inter-war period when a strategy had to be adopted in the face of the rise of fascism. It found expression in the Comintern’s so-called ‘social-fascism’ strategy, which was based quite precisely on this conception of the State and on the inability to distinguish between the parliamentary-democratic form of State and the quite specific form that is the fascist State. Since I have dealt elsewhere with this conception of the State, I shall merely observe in passing that it was still to be found a few years ago in the writings of André Glucksmann [article *Le fascisme qui vient d’en haut*],² who identified the French State of 1972 with a new type of fascism. Since then, of course, Glucksmann has gone over from neo-Stalinism to the most threadbare anti-Marxism, no doubt believing that his previous efforts were ‘all Marx’s fault’. I should add, however, that a theory of the capitalist State must be capable of explaining more than the momentous difference between the parliamentary-democratic State and the exceptional State. It must account for differences within the capitalist exceptional State itself: in *The Crisis of the Dictatorships*, I tried to show that the differences between fascism and military dictatorship are of decisive import for the formulation of political

strategy. They were central in Spain, Portugal and Greece, and, as is testified by discussion in the South American Left, they are no less so with regard to a number of current regimes in Latin America. But it is also necessary to establish the differences between various forms of the parliamentary-democratic State. Who does not remember the political setback that resulted for a certain time from the inability to grasp the specificity of the Gaullist State in France?

The urgent theoretical task is therefore the following: *We have to grasp the mode in which the class struggle, and especially political struggle and domination, are inscribed in the institutional structure of the State* (in our case, bourgeois domination in the material framework of the capitalist State); *this must be done in such a way as to explain the differential forms and precise historical transformations of the State.* The capitalist State, too, plays an organic role in political domination and struggle, by constituting the bourgeoisie as the politically dominant class. To be sure, the class struggle has primacy over apparatuses (in this case, the state apparatus). But it is not outside, or prior to, the State that the bourgeoisie is established as the dominant class: the State is not erected to suit its convenience, and nor does it function as a mere appendage of bourgeois domination. The role played by the State in political domination is also inscribed in its institutional materiality: it is here a question of its very class nature. In order to make a serious study of the State, we must therefore clarify its role with regard to both the dominant and the dominated classes.

I shall now attempt this task, while remaining at a fairly general level. My remarks will become fully clear only when we come to analyse the present-day form of the State: authoritarian statism.

¹ Balibar, op. cit.

² *Les Temps Modernes*, February 1972, 'Le fascisme qui vient d'en haut'.

The State and the Dominant Classes

With regard to the dominant classes, and particularly the bourgeoisie, the State's principal role is one of *organization*. It represents and organizes the dominant class or classes; or, more precisely, it represents and organizes the long-term political interest of a *power bloc*, which is composed of several bourgeois class fractions (for the bourgeoisie is divided into class fractions), and which sometimes embraces dominant classes issuing from other modes of production that are present in the capitalist social formation. (The classical example of such a non-bourgeois participant – an example that is still topical in the dominated-dependent countries – is the class of big landowners.) By means of the State are organized the conflictual unity of the alliance in power and the unstable equilibrium of compromise among its components. This is done under the bloc hegemony and leadership of one class or fraction: the hegemonic class or fraction.

The State constitutes the political unity of the dominant classes, thereby establishing them as dominant. Moreover, this fundamental role of organization does not involve just one apparatus or branch of the State (political parties), but concerns, in varying degrees and manners, the totality of its apparatuses – including pre-eminently repressive ones such as the military or police. The State is able to play this role in organizing and unifying the bourgeoisie and the power bloc insofar as it enjoys *relative autonomy* of given fractions and components, and of various particular interests. Such autonomy

is indeed constitutive of the capitalist State: it refers to the State's materiality as an apparatus relatively separated from the relations of production, and to the specificity of classes and class struggle under capitalism that is implicit in that separation.

I have developed these analyses elsewhere and shall not take them up again. Let me simply recall that, contrary to what is sometimes thought, they are not applicable only to a given form of the capitalist State, above all the 'liberal State' of competitive capitalism. They concern the structural core of that State, and therefore also affect its form in the current phase of monopoly capitalism. *Today as in the past*, this State has to represent the long-term political interest of the whole bourgeoisie (the national capitalist collective), although it does so under the hegemony of one of its fractions – currently monopoly capital:

(a) The bourgeoisie still appears as constitutively divided into class fractions: monopoly and non-monopoly capital (for monopoly capital is not an integral entity, but designates a contradictory and uneven process of 'fusion' operating among various fractions of capital). These fractional divisions would be doubled, if we were to take into account present-day coordinates of the internationalization of capital.

(b) In their totality, albeit to an increasingly uneven degree, these bourgeois fractions are situated on the terrain of political domination and still form part of the existing power bloc. Contrary to certain PCF analyses of State Monopoly Capitalism, it is not just monopoly capital that occupies the terrain of political domination.

(c) The State maintains its relative autonomy of particular fractions of the power bloc (including fractions of monopoly capital itself) so that it may ensure the organization of the general interest of the bourgeoisie under the hegemony of one of its fractions. Contrary to certain analyses of State Monopoly Capitalism, the State and the monopolies are not 'fused' together (a conception now abandoned by the PCF); nor, strictly speaking, are they 'united' (even in a contradictory manner) within a 'single mechanism'.

(d) All these points remain true – even though the current forms of the process of monopolization, together with the specific

hegemony of monopoly capital over the bourgeoisie as a whole, unquestionably set restrictions on the State's autonomy vis-à-vis monopoly capital and on the reach of the latter's compromise with the other fractions of the bourgeoisie.

How is this state policy in favour of the bourgeois power bloc concretely established?

Some of my earlier formulations may now be made more precise. The (capitalist) State should not be regarded as an intrinsic entity: like 'capital', *it is rather a relationship of forces, or more precisely the material condensation of such a relationship among classes and class fractions, such as this is expressed within the State in a necessarily specific form.*³

So important are all the terms of this formulation that we should dwell on each one in turn. Firstly, by grasping the State as the condensation of a *relationship*, we avoid the impasse of that eternal counterposition of the State as a Thing-instrument and the State as a Subject. Regarded as a *Thing*, in the manner of the old instrumentalist conception, the State is a passive, or even neutral, tool which is so completely manipulated by one class or fraction that it is divested of any autonomy whatsoever. Conceived as a *Subject*, the State enjoys an absolute autonomy that refers to its will as the supposedly rationalizing instance of civil society. This conception originated with Hegel, only to be taken up by Max Weber and the dominant current of political sociology (the functionalist-institutionalist current). It relates this autonomy to the peculiar power which the State is supposed to hold and to the bearers of this power and of state rationality: above all the bureaucracy and political elites.

However, the State is not purely and simply a relationship, or the condensation of a relationship; it is the *specific material condensation* of a relationship of forces among classes and class fractions.

We should pause for a while over this important question, since it concerns the recent theoretical-political evolution of the French Communist Party. At the time, I advanced this analysis of the State as a material condensation of a class relationship in opposition to the conception expressed in the Communist analyses of State

Monopoly Capitalism. I criticized the latter essentially on the grounds that they led to the vision of a State ‘fused’ with monopoly capital – a State with no autonomy that is purely at the service of the monopolies. In other words, I considered that these analyses shared in the instrumentalist conception of the State. But I also tried to show that the vision in which the State is ultimately subject to the will of the monopolies is also fully in accord with a conception that neglects the specific materiality of the State. If the State is apprehended as a tool or instrument, its materiality has no political relevance of its own: it is simply reducible to state power, that is, to the class which manipulates the instrument. Thus, with various secondary modifications, that same tool could ultimately be used by the working class for a change in state power and a transition to socialism.

On the first of these points, the analyses of the PCF have since undergone evolution. The course of this development may be observed in the collective work by Fabre, Hincker and Sève as well as a series of articles by Hincker.⁴

These new positions represent a considerable evolution, since, following a trajectory begun a long time ago, they break with the instrumentalist conception of the State bequeathed by Stalinist dogmatism. The State is now grasped as the condensation of a relationship: ‘The State and its policy, forms and structures therefore express the interests of the dominant class not in a mechanical fashion, but through a relationship of forces that makes of the State a condensed expression of the ongoing class struggle.’⁵ Despite the scope of this evolution, the PCF analyses concerning the second point persist in neglecting the peculiar materiality of the State viewed precisely as a ‘special’ apparatus.

The most profound remarks on this question are to be found in Hincker’s articles, which go to the heart of the debate within European Communism (in Italy as well as in Spain and Great Britain). Hincker refers to two conceptions of the State as having been intertwined throughout the history of the workers’ movement: a ‘narrow’ conception for which the State is in its essence *an apparatus*, and a ‘broad’ conception – the one accepted as valid by

Hincker – for which the State is simply the expression of a class *relationship*. Now, Hincker does not present the opposition between these conceptions in a correct manner. For the real opposition is between an instrumentalist conception of the Thing-State and the one that regards the State as the material condensation of a class relationship of forces. Contrary to what Hincker's analyses seem to imply, the State's material aspect as an apparatus does not at all disappear if we view the State as the condensation of a class relationship. As I tried to show in Part One, the material framework of the capitalist State is constituted by its relationship to the relations of production and to the social division of labour concentrated in its separation from those relations. The State is not reducible to the relationship of forces; it exhibits an opacity and resistance of its own. To be sure, change in the class relationship of forces always affects the State; but it does not find expression in the State in a direct and immediate fashion. It adapts itself exactly to the materiality of the various state apparatuses, only becoming crystallized in the State in a refracted form that varies according to the apparatus. A change in state power is never enough to transform the materiality of the state apparatus. For, as we know, such a transformation depends on a specific kind of operation and action.

Let us now come back to the relationship between the State and social classes. Whether the State is conceived as a Thing or as a Subject (and thus, in both cases, as an intrinsic entity), the relationship between the State and social classes, and in particular the dominant classes and fractions, is always apprehended in an *external relation*. Either the dominant classes subordinate the (Thing) State by means of 'influence' and pressure groups, or else the (Subject) State subordinates the dominant classes to itself. In this external relation, State and dominant classes are always considered as intrinsic entities 'confronting' or 'facing' each other. The power possessed by the one is equal to the other's lack of power, in keeping with a traditional conception of power as a given *quantity* in society: the conception of *zero-sum power*. Either the dominant class absorbs the State by emptying it of its own power (the Thing-State), or else the State resists the dominant class and draws off its power

to its own profit (that version of the State as a Subject arbitrating among social classes which is so dear to Social Democracy).

Furthermore, in the conception of the State as Thing, its pro-bourgeois policy is established purely through the hold exercised over the instrument-State by a single fraction of the bourgeoisie – currently monopoly capital. That fraction itself is supposed to deploy a political unity that is somehow prior to state action: the State plays no role in organising the bourgeois power bloc, and it has *no autonomy whatever* vis-à-vis the dominant or hegemonic class or fraction. By contrast, in the conception of the State as Subject, it is the State that is endowed with a rationalistic will – with power of its own and a *tendency to absolute autonomy* of social classes. Always external to these classes, the State imposes ‘its’ will (that of the bureaucracy and political elites) on the divergent and rival interests of civil society.

The two theses are therefore unable either to explain how a state policy is established in favour of the dominant classes, or to grapple with the decisive problem of *internal contradictions within the State*. In their common perspective, the State is related externally to social classes and thus naturally appears as a monolithic bloc without cracks of any kind. In the case of the Thing-State, which seems to be endowed with an intrinsic instrumental unity, contradictions exist only as external frictions (influences or pressures) of the various parts and cogs of the machine or instrument State; each dominant fraction or particular interest group pulls the cover of the State towards itself. In the last analysis, then, contradictions are here of secondary significance, representing mere disorders of the State’s quasi-metaphysical unity and contributing nothing to the establishment of its policy. They are even supposed to disturb that policy, although they can do so only temporarily. For the instrumental centralism of the State – due to the hold exercised over it by a class or fraction – always re-establishes itself in a mechanical fashion.

In the case of the State as Subject, state unity is the necessary expression of its rationalistic will and forms part of its essence set against the splinterings of civil society. The internal contradictions

of the State are still secondary, accidental and episodic manifestations, essentially due to frictions or antagonisms between the various political elites or bureaucratic groups that embody its unifying will. In the first case, class contradictions are external to the State; here the contradictions of the State are external to social classes.

Now, these internal cracks, divisions and contradictions of the State cannot represent mere dysfunctional accidents, since they are organically linked to the establishment of state policy favouring the bloc in power: to the concrete functioning of its relative autonomy and to its organizational role. *The establishment of the State's policy must be seen as the result of the class contradictions inscribed in the very structure of the State* (the State as a relationship). The State is the condensation of a relationship of forces between classes and class fractions, such as these express themselves, in a necessarily specific form, *within the State itself*. In other words, the State is through and through constituted-divided by class contradictions. Thus, an institution destined to reproduce class divisions is not, and can never be, a monolithic bloc without cracks, whose policy is established, as it were, in spite of its own contradictions. Contrary to conceptions that treat it as a Thing or a Subject, the State is itself divided. It is not enough simply to say that contradictions and struggles traverse the State – as if it were a matter of penetrating an already constituted substance or of passing through an empty site that is already there. Class contradictions are the very stuff of the State: they are present in its material framework and pattern its organization; while the State's policy is the result of their functioning within the State.

For the moment let us just consider contradictions between fractions within the power bloc. Within the State these take the form of internal contradictions between, and at the heart of, its various branches and apparatuses, following both horizontal and vertical directions. For the diverse classes and fractions of the power bloc share in political domination only to the extent that they are present *in* the State. Each state branch or apparatus and each of their respective sections and levels (for, beneath their centralized

unity, the two often duplicate and remain blind to each other) frequently constitutes the power-base and favoured representative of a particular fraction of the bloc, or of a conflictual alliance of several fractions opposed to certain others. In short, it is the specific concentration-crystallization of a given interest or alliance of particular interests. The executive and parliament, the army, the judiciary, various ministries, regional, municipal and central apparatuses, the ideological apparatuses – all of these, which are themselves divided into distinct circuits, networks and vantage-points, are often the pre-eminent representatives of the diverging interests of one or several fractions of the power-bloc. According to the concrete social formation, the fractions concerned will include the big landowners (as in many dominated and dependent countries); non-monopoly capital, or its commercial, industrial or banking fraction; monopoly capital (whether predominantly banking or industrial); the internationalized bourgeoisie or the domestic bourgeoisie.

Contradictions among the dominant classes and fractions – or in other words, the relationship of forces within the power bloc – are precisely what makes it necessary for the unity of the bloc to be organized by the State. They therefore exist as *contradictory relations enmeshed within the State*. As the material condensation of a contradictory relationship, the State does not at all organize the unity of the power bloc from the outside, by resolving class contradictions at a distance. On the contrary, however paradoxical it may seem, the play of these contradictions within the State's materiality alone makes possible the State's organizational role.

We must therefore discard once and for all the view of the State as a completely united mechanism, founded on a homogeneous and hierarchical distribution of the centres of power moving from top to bottom of a uniform ladder or pyramid. According to this conception, the homogeneity and uniformity of the exercise of power is ensured by juridical regulation within the State: by a constitutional and administrative law that demarcates the fields of competence and activity of the various apparatuses. This is a radically false image, however. Of course, the present-day State does

possess a hierarchical and bureaucratic structure, and it does indeed exhibit the characteristics of centralism. But these features do not resemble their juridical representation in any way whatsoever – not in France, the land of centralizing Jacobinism in the tradition of Absolutist monarchy, and not in any other country.

When we consider the role of the present-day State in establishing the general, long-term political interests of the power bloc under the hegemony of a given fraction of monopoly capital (that is, its organizational role within the unstable equilibrium of compromises), the concrete functioning of its relative autonomy and the latter's restrictedness in relation to monopoly capital – in short, when we consider the current policy of the State, we can now see why it is the result of contradictions between, and within, the various state branches and apparatuses. We are really talking now of the following:

1. A structural mechanism whereby an apparatus filters the information given, and the measures taken, by other apparatuses. The process of selection is implied by the particular materiality and history of each apparatus (army, school system, judiciary, and so on), by its specific internal representation of given interests, and, more generally, by its position in the configuration of the relationship of forces.

2. A contradictory movement of decisions, and 'non-decisions', taken by branches and apparatuses of the State. Non-decisions – that is, a certain systematic lack of state action – are not a conjunctural phenomenon, but are inscribed in the contradictory structure of the State and are one result of the contradictions discussed above. They are just as essential to the unity-organization of the power bloc as the positive measures that it undertakes.

3. The determination of priorities, and counter-priorities, within the organizational structure of a given state apparatus or branch, according to its specific materiality and the specific interests it represents. The order is different for each apparatus and branch, and each network or level thereof, according to its place in the configuration of the relationship of forces: there is thus a series of mutually contradictory priorities and counter-priorities.

4. A system graded by branch and apparatus, and located within the decision-making process, whereby measures proposed by other branches and apparatuses are filtered and the measures which they have already adopted are selected for various modes of practical execution.

5. A set of conjunctural, conflictual and compensatory measures responding to the problems of the hour.

The policy of the State is thus established through a real process of intra-state contradictions. It is precisely for this reason that, at an initial, short-term level (or from the point of view of micropolitical physiology), its policy appears to be phenomenally incoherent and chaotic. Although a certain coherence arrives with the conclusion of the process, the organizational role of the State is quite clearly marked by structural limitations. These demonstrate, among other things, the illusory character of conceptions which, incorporating illusions about the real possibilities of capitalist planning, argue that present-day 'organized' capitalism has managed to overcome its contradictions by means of the State. Now, these limitations upon the organizational role of the State *are not imposed on it merely from outside*. They concern not only the contradictions inherent in the process of reproduction and accumulation of capital, but also the structure and material framework that make of the State the organizational locus of the power bloc and allow it a relative autonomy vis-à-vis given fractions of that bloc.

The State's autonomy is therefore not *set against* the fractions of the power bloc: it is not a function of the State's capacity to remain external to them, but rather the result of what takes place *within* the State. Its autonomy is concretely manifested in the diverse, contradictory measures that each of these classes and fractions, through its specific presence in the State and the resulting play of contradictions, manages to have integrated into state policy. This is true even of *negative measures*: that is to say, opposition and resistance to the adoption or implementation of measures favouring other fractions of the power bloc (for example, the present resistance of non-monopoly capital in the face of monopoly capital). The State's autonomy of any given fraction of the power bloc

therefore takes the concrete form of the relative autonomy commanded by a given state branch, apparatus or network vis-à-vis others of its kind.

Of course, this does not mean that no coherent political projects are formulated by the representatives and political personnel of the dominant classes; nor that the state bureaucracy does not play a role of its own in orienting state policy. But contradictions within the power bloc traverse the bureaucracy and state personnel according to complex lines of division and in a manner that varies with the given branch or apparatus of the State (army, administration, judiciary, political parties, church, and so on). Rather than facing a corps of state functionaries and personnel united and cemented around a univocal political will, we are dealing with fiefs, clans and factions: a multiplicity of diversified micro-policies. However coherent each of these may appear in isolation, they are nevertheless mutually contradictory; and the policy of the State essentially consists in the outcome of their collision, rather than in the (more or less successful) application of the global objective of the state apex. Hence the striking and recurrent phenomenon of the *volte-face*: governmental policy is continually constructed out of accelerations and brakings, about-turns, hesitations, and changes of course. This is not due to a native incapacity of bourgeois representatives and top-level personnel, but is the necessary expression of the structure of the State.

In locating the State as the material condensation of a relationship of forces, we must also grasp it as a *strategic field and process* of intersecting power networks, which both articulate and exhibit mutual contradictions and displacements. There result shifting and contradictory tactics, whose general objective or institutional crystallization takes shape in the state apparatuses. This strategic field is traversed by tactics which are often highly explicit at the restricted level of their inscription in the State: they intersect and conflict with one another, finding their targets in some apparatuses or being short-circuited by others, and eventually map out that general line of force, the State's 'policy', which traverses confrontations within the State. At this level, to be sure, the policy

is still decipherable not only as a strategic calculation, but even more as the result of a conflictual co-ordination of explicit and divergent micro-policies and tactics, and as the national formulation of a coherent global project.

However, the State does not constitute a mere assembly of detachable parts: it exhibits an *apparatus unity* which is normally designated by the term centralization or *centralism*, and which is related to the fissiparous *unity of state power*. This finds expression in the fact that its global policy is massively oriented in favour of the hegemonic class or fraction – today, in favour of monopoly capital. But the unity of state power is not established through the cohesive will of the bearers of monopoly capital or through their physical hold over the State. Unity-centralization is written into the capitalist State's hierarchic-bureaucratized framework as the effect of the reproduction of the social division of labour within the State (including the division between manual and intellectual labour) and of its specific separation from the relations of production. It also arises from the State's structure as the condensation of a relationship of forces, and from the predominance over other classes or fractions of the power bloc that is commanded within the State by the hegemonic class or fraction. This hegemonic position in the relationship of forces is not merely present within the State: the State actually reflects the situation, just as the power bloc can in the end only operate under the hegemony and leadership of the component that cements it together in the face of the class enemy. The strategic organization of the State destines it to function under the hegemony of a class or fraction located within it. At the same time, the privileged position of this class or fraction is a constitutive element of its hegemony within the constellation of the relationship of forces.

The unity-centralization of the State, which currently favours monopoly capital, is therefore established through a complex process. The state institutions undergo changes whereby certain *dominant* mechanisms, modes, and decision-making centres are made impermeable to all but monopoly interests, becoming centres for switching the rails of state policy or for bottling up measures

taken 'elsewhere' in the State that favour other fractions of capital. Moreover, we are talking here of a two-way causal relation: not only does the hegemonic class or fraction establish as dominant the apparatus that already crystallizes its interests, but in the long term, every dominant state apparatus (whose dominance may be due to several factors, corresponding above all to prior relations of hegemony and to the history of the State concerned) tends to become the privileged seat of the hegemonic fraction's interests, and to incarnate changes in the relations of hegemony. This unity of state power is established through a whole chain whereby certain apparatuses are subordinated to others, and through the domination of a particular state apparatus or branch (the military, a political party, a ministry, or whatever) which crystallizes the interests of the hegemonic fraction – domination, that is to say, exercised over other branches or apparatuses that are the resistance centres of other fractions of the power bloc. The process may therefore involve multiform underdetermination or duplication of apparatuses: shifts in function and competence, and constant divergence between *real power* and *formal power*; the establishment of a functional trans-state network rising above and short-circuiting every level of state apparatus and branch (as is done today by the French DATAR), and crystallizing monopoly interests by its very nature; and lastly, sweeping changes of the traditional hierarchical structure of state administration – the creation of circuits for training and deploying special corps-detachments of top civil servants, who possess a high degree of mobility both within the State itself and between the State and monopoly business (X, ENA), and who are appointed (and induced) to carry out policies in favour of monopoly capital (witness the present role of the famous ministerial *cabinets*, the Plan Commissariat, and so on).

These analyses allow us to pose an important problem concerning the accession to power of the popular masses and their political organizations within a perspective of transition to socialism. The process evidently cannot stop at the taking of state power: it must extend to the transformation of the state apparatuses. But such

transformation always presupposes that state power has actually been taken.

(a) Given the complex articulation of various state apparatuses and branches (which is often expressed in a distinction between real power and the conspicuous formal power of the political arena), the formation of a Left government does not necessarily or automatically entail that the Left exercises real control over all, or even certain, state apparatuses. This is all the more so in that the state institutional structure allows the bourgeoisie to meet a popular accession to power by permutating the sites of real and formal power.

(b) Even when a Left government really controls state branches and apparatuses, it does not necessarily control the one or ones which play the dominant role in the State and which therefore constitute the central pivot of real power. The centralized unity of the State does not rest on a pyramid whose summit need only be occupied for effective control to be ensured. Moreover, even when a Left government manages to gain control of the hitherto dominant apparatus, the state institutional structure enables the bourgeoisie to transpose the role of dominance from one apparatus to another. In other words, the organization of the bourgeois State allows it to function by successive dislocation and displacement through which the bourgeoisie's power may be removed from one apparatus to another: the State is not a monolithic bloc, but a strategic field. Given that their rigidity makes the state apparatuses resistant to straightforward manipulation by the bourgeoisie, this permutation of apparatus dominance evidently takes place not overnight but according to a relatively lengthy process; this lack of malleability may thus act to the disadvantage of the bourgeoisie and create a breathing-space for the Left in power. Still, the very process of permutation tends to reorganize the centralized unity of the State around the newly dominant apparatus – an apparatus which thereby becomes the supreme refuge-centre of bourgeois power in the State, remaining in operation as such throughout the period of Left government. This complex mechanism may assume several forms, certain of which appear paradoxical. Thus, institutions-apparatuses

that normally have an altogether secondary, or purely decorative function may suddenly take on a decisive role: the British House of Lords recently blocked nationalization bills of the Labour government; under Allende, the law courts suddenly discovered an irrepressible vocation for guaranteeing 'legality'; and various constitutional councils have at times played a similar role.

(c) Nor is this all. The internal contradictions and disarticulations of real power and formal power not only affect relations between the various state apparatuses and branches, but are lodged at the heart of each one. For each apparatus, including the state administration, the army or the police, is organized around a centre whose effective power is not located at the summit of the hierarchy as it appears on the arena of public office. What are involved here are – just as much as (or more than) vertically centralized apparatuses – nodes and focuses of real power located at strategic points of the various state branches and apparatuses. Even if the Left in power manages to control, in their formal hierarchy, the heights of the dominant state apparatus or apparatuses, it remains to be seen whether it will really control the core of their effective power.

³ As I pointed out in the Preface, I am here speaking only in my own name. But of French works that tend in the same direction, I should mention at least those of Christine Buci-Glucksmann and M. Castells.

⁴ *Les communistes et l'Etat*, Paris 1977. For a critical survey of the theory, see *La Nouvelle Critique*, No. 93, 1976, and a number of articles in *France Nouvelle*. I myself have debated with Hincker and Boccara concerning the collective work *La crise de l'Etat* (op. cit.): see *France Nouvelle*, 1 November 1976, and *La Nouvelle Critique*, February 1977. See also the debate in *Repères*, January 1977.

⁵ *Les communistes et l'Etat*, op. cit., p. 13.

The State and Popular Struggles

If we are to understand the internal divisions of the State, the concrete mode in which its autonomy functions, and the establishment of its policy through characteristic fissures, then we cannot confine ourselves to contradictions among the classes and fractions of the power bloc: *for those processes depend equally, or even above all, on the State's role vis-à-vis the dominated classes.* The state apparatuses consecrate and reproduce hegemony by bringing the power bloc and certain dominated classes into a (variable) game of provisional compromises. The state apparatuses organize-unify the power bloc by permanently disorganizing-dividing the dominated classes, polarizing them towards the power bloc, and short-circuiting their own political organizations. The State's relative autonomy of a given fraction of the power bloc is also necessary for the organization of that bloc's long-term, global hegemony over the dominated classes: this often involves the State in imposing the material compromises indispensable for such hegemony on the various fractions of the power bloc.

However, just like the State's role in relation to the power bloc, its role with regard to the dominated classes does not derive from some intrinsic rationality as an entity 'external' to the dominated classes. It too is inscribed in the state organizational structure as the material condensation of a class relationship of forces. The State concentrates not only the relationship of forces between fractions of

the power bloc, *but also the relationship between that bloc and the dominated classes.*

While probably accepting the above analyses of the relationship between the State and the dominated classes, the overwhelming majority of writers tend to consider the State as a monolithic bloc imposed on those classes from without, and as an impenetrable and distinct fortress upon which they can react only by external assault and encirclement. According to this view of things, contradictions between the dominant and dominated classes remain contradictions between the State and the popular masses situated outside the State. The internal contradictions of the State would then be due solely to contradictions among dominant classes and fractions; the struggle of the dominated classes could not be present within the State, and would consist in mere pressures exerted upon it. In reality, however, popular struggles traverse the State from top to bottom and in a mode quite other than penetration of an intrinsic entity from the outside. If political struggles bearing on the State traverse its apparatuses, this is because they are already inscribed in that state framework whose strategic configuration they map out. *Of course, popular struggles, and power in general, stretch far beyond the State:* but *insofar as* they are genuinely political, they are not really external to the State. Strictly speaking, popular struggles are inscribed in the State not because they are exhaustively included in a totalizing Moloch-State, but because the State itself bathes in struggles that constantly submerge it. All the same, it should be made clear that even struggles that go beyond the State (and not only class struggles do this) are not thereby ‘extraneous to power’: they are always inscribed in power apparatuses which concretize them and which also condense a relationship of forces (factories or companies, to some extent the family, and so on). Given the State’s complex articulation with the totality of power mechanisms, these very struggles always have ‘long-range’ effects *within* the State.

Thus, the dominated classes and their particular struggles have a specific presence within the structure of the State – a presence that is expressed by the State’s material framework bound up with the relations of production, by its hierarchical-bureaucratic

organization, and by the reproduction of the social division of labour within the State. The purpose of these is not simply to confront the dominated classes head on, but to maintain and reproduce the domination-subordination relationship at the heart of the State: the class enemy is always present within the State. The precise configuration of the state apparatuses as a whole, and the organization of any one apparatus or branch of a given State (army, judiciary, administration, school system, the Church, and so on) are dependent on the relationship of forces not only within the power bloc, but also between that bloc and the popular masses, and thus on the role these apparatuses have to fulfil with regard to the dominated classes. This explains the differential organization of the army, police and Church in various states, and accounts for their particular histories that are also traces left in the state structure by popular struggles.

Furthermore, in working to organize hegemony and thus to divide and disorganize the popular masses, the State installs particularly the petty bourgeoisie and the rural popular classes as veritable class props of the power bloc, dislocating their alliance with the working class. The resulting alliances-compromises and relationship of forces are embodied in the structure of the particular state apparatus that pre-eminently fulfils this function. The French educational apparatus, for example, cannot be understood unless we see concentrated within it this relationship between the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie; nor can the army be understood in isolation from the relationship between the bourgeoisie and the popular rural classes. Finally, if a given apparatus (political parties, parliament, the executive, the administration, the army) assumes the dominant role in the State, it does so not only by virtue of concentrating the power of the hegemonic fraction, but also because it manages at the same time to crystallize the State's politico-ideological role vis-à-vis the dominated classes. More generally, the internal divisions and contradictions of the State – those among and within its various branches and apparatuses, and in the state personnel – are also due to the existence of popular struggles within the State.

Now, the existence of the popular classes is concretized within the State *in a specific manner* different from that exhibited by the dominant classes and fractions.

The dominant classes and fractions exist in the State by means of apparatuses or branches which, although subject to the unity of the state power of the hegemonic fraction, nevertheless crystallize a power that is peculiar to these classes and fractions. By contrast, the dominated classes exist in the State not by means of apparatuses concentrating a *power of their own*, but essentially in the form of centres of opposition to the power of the dominant classes. It would be an error fraught with serious political consequences to conclude from the presence of the popular classes in the State that they can ever lastingly hold power *without a radical transformation of the State*. Contrary to the views of certain Italian Communists,⁶ the internal contradictions of the State do not express a 'contradictory nature' such that a real situation of *dual power* already exists *at the heart of the State*: on the one hand, the dominant power of the bourgeoisie and, on the other, the power of the popular masses. The popular classes cannot hold such power within the State because of the unity of the state power of the dominant classes, who shift the centre of real power from one apparatus to another as soon as the relationship of forces within any given one seems to be swinging to the side of the popular masses. But such power is also impossible because of the very material structure of the State, comprising as it does internal mechanisms of reproduction of the domination-subordination relationship: this structure does indeed retain the dominated classes within itself, but it retains them precisely as *dominated* classes. Even if there is a shift in the relationship of forces and a modification of state power in favour of the popular classes, the State tends sooner or later to re-establish the relationship of forces in favour of the bourgeoisie, sometimes in a new form. It is often said that the answer is simply for the popular masses to 'lay siege' to the state apparatuses, as if they were to penetrate something hitherto really external to themselves and change it merely by virtue of their sudden presence inside the fortress. But the popular classes have always been present in the State, without that

ever having changed anything of its hard core. The action of the popular masses within the State is a necessary condition of its transformation, but is not itself a sufficient condition.

Although popular struggles are constitutively present in divisions of the State in the more or less direct forms of the contradiction between dominant and dominated classes, they are also present in a *mediated* form through the impact of popular struggle on contradictions among the dominant classes and fractions themselves. Contradictions between the power bloc and the dominated classes directly enter into contradictions within the power bloc. To take but one example, the tendency of the rate of profit to decline – which is a prime element of division within the capitalist class (since, among other reasons, a counter-tendency to this decline involves devalorization of certain fractions of capital) – is in the last analysis only an expression of the struggle of the dominated classes against exploitation.

Thus, the various fractions of capital (monopoly or non-monopoly capital, industrial, banking or commercial capital) do not always stand in a uniformly contradictory relationship to the popular classes (or a given one of them); nor are their political attitudes to these classes always identical. In a particular conjuncture or over a longer period, differences of tactics or even of political strategy *are among the prime factors of division within the power bloc itself*. This is borne out by the whole history of capitalism: one has only to look at the diverse policies followed by different States when facing the same problems. While it is true that the dominant classes and fractions are in basic agreement over the maintenance and reproduction of class domination and exploitation, it would be wrong to imagine that at every moment there is agreement on the policy to be followed with regard to the popular masses. Equally false is the idea that shifts in bourgeois policy are simply a question of historical periodization, as if the entire bourgeoisie lined up behind a given political solution according to the period and conjuncture in which it finds itself. Contradictions are always present within the power bloc and concern relatively minor problems as well as the broad political options. Among the latter is

the choice of the very state forms to be established against the popular masses: the choice between exceptional forms of State (fascism, military dictatorship or Bonapartism, which are forms of open war against the popular masses) and regimes of ‘parliamentary democracy’; or the choice between various forms of the latter (for instance, classical right-wing regimes or social-democratic ones). Here too, the bourgeoisie does not rally *en bloc* and with a single voice to one or other of these alternative solutions.

This disunity is all the more marked in that, according to the nature of their contradictions with the popular masses, the various fractions of the power bloc often seek to enlist their support against the other fractions of the bloc. In other words, they seek to utilize the popular masses in their relationship of forces with the other fractions of the bloc – in order either to impose solutions more to their advantage, or to put up more effective resistance to solutions which favour other fractions over and above themselves. Examples involving such variegated policies are the compromise reached between monopoly capital and certain parts of the working class or the new petty bourgeoisie (salaried middle layers) and directed against non-monopoly capital; and the compromise reached between non-monopoly capital and the working class or traditional petty bourgeoisie (small traders, artisans) against monopoly capital. All those realities are condensed in divisions and contradictions within the State: among its various branches, networks and apparatuses, and at the heart of each one of these.

To sum up, popular struggles are inscribed in the institutional materiality of the State, even though they are not concluded in it; it is a materiality that carries the traces of these muted and multiform struggles. Just like any struggle involving the apparatuses of power, political struggles that bear upon the State are not in a position of exteriority with regard to it, but are bound up with its strategic configurations. As is the case with every power mechanism, the State is the material condensation of a *relationship*.

⁶ I shall mention here only the article by L. Gruppi, 'Sur le rapport démocratie-socialisme', in *Dialectiques*, No. 17, February 1977. There is a considerable difference on this question between the positions within the PCI – from P. Ingrao and G. Vacca to U. Cerroni, A. Reichlin and G. Amendola. See the interviews with certain PCI leaders made by H. Weber and published in *Parti communiste italien: aux sources de l'eurocommunisme*, Paris 1977. See also the special number of *Dialectiques: L'Italie et nous*, Nos. 18–19, 1977.

Towards a Relational Theory of Power?

In the more general context of the problematic of power, we can now see the dual relation of convergence and opposition between the above analyses and those which issue from different horizons, especially those of Michel Foucault. When Foucault sets forth his own conception of power, he directs his fire either against his peculiar caricature of Marxism or against the Marxism of the Third International and the Stalinist conception that a number of us have been criticizing for a long time now. However, I shall continue to speak in my own name: the remarks presented so far take up, develop and systematize analyses which were already evolving in texts of mine that appeared before the publication of Foucault's *Surveiller et punir* (1975) and *La volonté de savoir* (1976). Some of us did not wait for Foucault before proposing analyses of power with which his own investigations now concur in certain respects – although we cannot but rejoice at this development. I have already expressed my opinion on a number of points, and will here examine only Foucault's analyses of *power*. Their broad outline is fairly well known. They advance a conception of power as a strategic location of the relationship of forces within a given society: 'Power is not something that is required, seized or shared out; nor is it something that one keeps or lets slip ... It is undoubtedly necessary to adopt a nominalist position: power is neither an institution, nor a structure, nor a certain might with which some are endowed: it is the name given to a complex strategic location within a given

society ... Wherever there is power, there is resistance; and yet, or rather for that very reason, resistance is never in a position of exteriority with regard to power.’⁷ These positions seem to me partially correct:

1. The analyses I have made so far show that power itself is not a quantity or object of possession, nor a quality linked to a class essence or a class-subject (the dominant class). In fact, I already stressed these points in *Political Power and Social Classes*, especially in the chapter concerning the concept of power. To be sure, I only examined power to the extent that it covers the field of class struggle, since that was my principal object of investigation; but the important thing is what was said of power in that field. As applied to social classes, power should be understood as the capacity of one or several classes to realize their specific interests. It is a concept designating the field of their struggle – that of the *relationship of forces* and of the *relations* between one class and another; the concept of class interests thus designates the horizon of action occupied by a given class in relation to others. The capacity of one class to realize its interests is in opposition to the capacity (and interests) of other classes: *the field of power is therefore strictly relational*. The power of a particular class (the dominant class, for instance) does not refer to a substance which it holds in its hand: contrary to the old zero-sum conception, power is not a measurable quantity that the various classes share or exchange among one another. The power of a class refers above all to its objective place in economic, political and ideological relations – a place which overlies the practices of struggling classes (that is, the unequal relations of domination-subordination among classes rooted in the social division of labour), and which already consists in power relationships. The place of each class, and hence its power, is delimited (i.e. at once designated and limited) by the place of the other classes. Power is not then a quality attached to a class ‘in-itself’, understood as a collection of agents, but depends on, and springs from, a relational system of material places occupied by particular agents.

Power, and above all the political power that is pre-eminently ascribed to the State, also refers to the power organization of a class and to class position in a given conjuncture (amongst other things, party organization): it refers to the relations of classes constituted as social forces, and thus to a strategic field properly so-called. The political power of a class, its capacity to realize its political interests, depends not only on its class place (and determination) with regard to other classes, but also on the position and strategy it displays in relation to them – on what I have called opponent strategy.

2. Contrary to the view that Foucault and Deleuze impute to Marxism, I also stressed the fact that the State is not a thing or entity endowed with an intrinsic instrumental essence and a measurable power-quantum. It refers instead to the relations of social classes and forces. By state power can only be understood the power of certain (dominant) classes – that is to say, the place of these classes in a power-relation to other (dominated) ones – and, insofar as political power is involved here, the strategic relationship of forces among these classes and their respective positions. The State is neither the instrumental depository (object) of a power-essence held by the dominant class, nor a subject possessing a quantity of power equal to the quantity it takes from the classes which face it: the State is rather the strategic site of organization of the dominant class in its relationship to the dominated classes. It is a *site* and a *centre* of the exercise of power, but it possesses no power of its own. I stressed in my earlier work that political struggles, which concern the State and bear upon it (for popular struggles are never exhausted in the latter), are never external to the State but are inscribed in its framework; from this I drew a number of political conclusions. Now, those analyses also have considerable implications for the question of transition to socialism, and it is for this reason that I now dwell upon them.

Nevertheless, here too there remain basic differences between Marxism and the analyses advanced by Foucault.

1. Although power has as its constitutive field an unequal relation of relationships of force, its materiality is still not exhausted in the

modalities of the exercise of power. Power always has a *precise basis*. In the case of class division and struggle, this takes the form of: (a) *exploitation* (under capitalism extraction of surplus-value); (b) the place of the different classes in the various power apparatuses and mechanisms, and not just in the State – a place which is essential in the organization of the extra-state apparatuses themselves; and (c) the state apparatus, which, while evidently not embracing the totality of power apparatuses and mechanisms, does not thereby remain sealed against those located outside its own space. The relational field of class-specific power therefore refers to a material system of place-allocation throughout the social division of labour: it is fundamentally, though not exclusively, determined by exploitation. This explains the existence of class division, and thus of the class *struggle* and popular *struggles*. We may even conclude that, in a society in which the State utilizes all power (e.g., phallocracy or the family) for the purposes of relaying class power, *every struggle*, be it heterogeneous to class struggles properly so called (e.g. the struggle between men and women), acquires its characteristic meaning only to the extent that class struggles exist and allow other struggles to unfold. (I am leaving untouched the question of whether these other struggles may be effectively articulated to class struggles, and of whether such articulation is desirable.)

Now, for Foucault, the power relation never has any other basis than itself: it becomes a pure ‘situation’ in which power is always immanent; and the question *what power* and *power to do what* appears as a mere obstacle. This leads Foucault into a particular logical impasse from which there is no possible escape: his famous resistances, which are a necessary element of every power situation, remain a strictly gratuitous assertion in the sense that they are given no foundation: *they are a pure affirmation of principle*. It is often said that one can deduce from Foucault nothing more than a guerrilla war and scattered acts of harassment of power; but in fact, no kind of resistance is possible if we follow Foucault’s analyses. For if power is always already there, if every power situation is immanent in itself, *why should there ever be resistance? From where* would

resistance come, and *how would it be even possible?* This is an old question to which traditional political philosophy replied by invoking natural rights and the social contract; more recently, Deleuze has referred to originating-desire – which, though certainly not the right one, is at least an answer. In Foucault's writings, the question simply remains without a response.

However hard one tries, this absolutization in which power always refers to itself leads irresistibly to the idea of a Power-Master as the prime founder of all struggle-resistance. According to this view of things, struggles are originally and constitutively corrupted by power, of which they are a mere duplication, or even legitimization. Between the impossible naturalness of Foucault's resistances and the current conception of power (the State) as the perennial expression of original Evil the distance is not as great as it seems. Here every struggle cannot but nourish power, since it has no other basis than its relation to power, indeed no other basis than power itself. Our 'new philosophers', especially Lévy, can legitimately call Foucault to their support: more than the last consequence of his thought, they are its ultimate truth.

2. In their material basis, struggles always have primacy over the institutions-apparatuses of power (especially the State), even though they are invariably inscribed within their field. The other danger we must take care to avoid is the essentialist conception of power (including the State) according to which struggles (the social) can only subvert power to the extent that they are external to it. Quite recently, I should point out, Lefort and the authors of the *Libre* review were still arguing such positions:⁸ their critique of Foucault and of Marxism is based on such worn-out notions as that of a social instance establishing power in a relationship of radical exteriority.

Now, struggles can subvert power without really being external to it. If such subversion is impossible in Foucault's conception, this is not because he holds, together with and following Marxism (although for different reasons), that power is by nature relational and that struggles-resistances are never absolutely external to power. Power and resistance appear in Foucault's writings as two strictly equivalent poles of a relation: resistances have no basis. It is

in this way that the 'power' pole ends up as the primary one – a development which gives rise, in Foucault's peculiarly suggestive and thus approximative and analogical language, to the constant sliding of the term power. It designates at one moment a *relation* (the power relation), at another, and often simultaneously, *one pole* of the power-resistances relation. In the absence of a foundation for resistances, power is in the end essentialized and absolutized, becoming the opposite 'pole' of resistances, a substance which contaminates them by spreading, a pole that is primary and determining in relation to resistances. Hence Foucault's problem: how is it possible to avoid falling into the conceptual trap of a domination that cannot be escaped; of a power that is absolutely privileged in relation to resistances; of resistances that are always ensnared by power? There can only be one answer: it is necessary to break loose from this hypostasized power and rediscover at any cost something other than these resistances inscribed in power – something at last radically external to the power that has become an essentialized and absolutized pole of the relation. And this is necessary even if it seriously calls into question the very analysis of power as a relation. Foucault has located this something in what he calls the 'plebs': namely, that 'something in the body of society – in classes, groups and even individuals – which somehow escapes the relations of power ... which is their limit, their reverse side, and their consequence ... It is that which responds to every advance of power with a movement designed to break free from it.'⁹

Of course, this affirmation of the 'plebs' is just as groundless as that of resistances. But if Foucault's 'plebs' can limit power only to the extent that it 'escapes' or 'breaks from' it – to the extent that it is outside the power relation – this is because power itself has now passed from a relation into one essentialized pole of the relation. It is an ensnaring substance that can be limited only by escaping from it: a voracious, self-reproducing machine that can be halted only from outside its field of operation. It follows quite naturally that, for Foucault, the plebs-resistances are ground down and 'integrated' into power as soon as 'they set themselves a strategy'. They are a flight from power; but at a deeper level, theirs is a forward-moving

flight. The 'something' that was supposed to check the omnipotence of absolutized power finds itself in the end facing more emptiness. Left with groundless resistances and hypostasized power, Foucault ends up opposing mere emptiness to a power that is no longer a relation but a phagocytic essence.

There is no need to have recourse to something wholly external to power and its various mechanisms in order to limit their supposedly intrinsic omnipotence. For, in reality, they always carry internal limits of their own. As regards the State (although this is also true of mechanisms of class power not included in the State), such limits are defined and materially grounded by the reproduction of class places and positions within the State. Power, even in its state form, is never pure immanence. The State and power in general are not an essence or pole standing in counterposition to struggles. If struggle always has primacy over apparatuses, this is because power is a relation between struggles and practices (those of the exploiters and the exploited, the rulers and the ruled) and because the State above all is the condensation of a relationship of forces defined precisely by struggle. No more than the other power mechanisms does the State encounter limits in an original outside: it is not that the State is an omnipotent entity beyond which lies emptiness; but already inscribed in its materiality are internal limits imposed by the struggles of the dominated. Such struggles are always present in the State (and, more generally, in power mechanisms); for even though the State is already there, neither the State nor power is the First Cause of struggle. Struggles are inscribed in the strategic field of the mechanisms and apparatuses of power – that is to say, political struggles which bear upon the State in its peculiar strategic field without necessarily being 'integrated' into the power of the dominant classes.

This holds good not only for the State but for the entire edifice of power, which goes far beyond the State even conceived in its broadest sense. Because they may be located on this or the other side of the terrain of the State, struggles do not thereby take up a position absolutely external to power: they are always an integral part of the power edifice and make their own mark on the State by

reason of its complex articulation with the totality of power mechanisms. However, just as in the case of the State, struggles are not necessarily 'integrated' into the other power mechanisms in which they are inscribed. At any event, non-inscription in the State (for example, non-involvement in politics – that old refrain which is currently re-appearing) does not by itself prevent integration into the existing power. For it is impossible to remain external to power and escape its characteristic relations: one cannot avoid being trapped by power simply by remaining outside the State. The problem is indeed of a more general character, being posed with respect to every power mechanism and struggle wherever it may be located.

While not yet drawing out the political consequences, I shall conclude this section with two remarks of closer pertinence to the State.

1. The inscription of popular struggles in the State does not exhaust the problem of the *specific modalities* whereby the popular masses are *effectively* present in the *physical space* of given apparatuses. The State is not a straightforward relationship, but the *material* condensation of a relationship of forces: its specific framework involves exclusion of the popular masses from a directly physical presence in certain of its apparatuses. Thus, while the masses are directly present in such apparatuses as the school, the national conscript army and (through their representatives) the institutions of the electoral system, they are *kept at a physical distance* from such apparatuses as the police, the judiciary and the state administration.

However, in the latter cases, political struggles are not really external to the strategic field of the State. Even when the popular masses are physically excluded from certain apparatuses, these struggles always have an effect within them – albeit an effect which is manifested at a distance, so to speak, and through the intermediation of the state personnel. Here too, the contours of physical exclusion from the State should not be understood as protective trenches or walls of a fortress-State besieged only from the outside; they are not dams that effectively seal off the State from

popular struggles, as may be suggested by dubious topographical metaphors. What is involved is rather a series of screens that prove to be *relay-screens* of popular struggles within the State.

Today, we can see this more clearly than ever in such apparatuses as the police, the judiciary and the state administration, which are divided and traversed at a distance by popular struggles. It is still clearer in certain forms of State that exhibit a paradoxical phenomenon impossible to explain unless we take account of the fact that, at any event, popular struggles are always inscribed within the State. Such struggles are manifested in the State with particular intensity precisely in those state forms which accumulate screens for keeping the masses at a distance from their physical space: in such cases, these screens turn out to be veritable sounding-boards or amplifiers of popular struggles. We saw the truth of this in the military dictatorships that prevailed in Portugal, Greece and Spain until quite recently. Unlike the traditional fascist regimes, which embraced certain popular classes by means of mass fascist parties and unions, these dictatorships constantly remained apart from the masses or were held at a distance by the masses themselves. Yet far from being effectively sealed off from the masses, they were distinctly more affected by them than were the fascist regimes. So important was this that they collapsed not under the impact of massive frontal and open attack – as had long been envisaged by the resistance organizations – but under the weight of *internal contradictions and divisions* in which the popular masses, though remaining at a distance, were the principal factor.

2. Whether or not one plays the game of the existing power and becomes integrated into the State therefore depends on the *political strategy* that is followed. For Foucault, however, it is the very adoption of a strategy that ‘integrates’ the ‘plebs’ in a hypostasized power, forcing them to leave a site on the absolute outside of power (in reality a *non-site*) in order to become again entangled in its net. Now, (a) We know that political strategy must be grounded on the autonomy of the organizations of the popular masses. But the attainment of such autonomy does not involve the political organizations in leaving the strategic field of the relationship of

forces that is the power-State, any more than it involves other organizations such as the trade unions in taking up a position outside the corresponding power mechanisms. To believe that this is even possible is an old illusion of anarchism (in the best sense of the term). Moreover, in neither case does self-organization on the terrain of power imply that these organizations must directly insert themselves in the physical space of the respective institutions (this will depend on the conjuncture), nor *a fortiori* that they must embrace the materiality of these institutions (quite the contrary), (b) We also know that, alongside their possible presence in the physical space of the state apparatuses, the popular masses must constantly maintain and deploy centres and networks at a distance from these apparatuses: I am referring, of course, to movements for direct, rank-and-file democracy and to self-management networks. But although these take up political objectives, they are not located outside the State or, in any case, outside power – contrary to the simplistic illusions of anti-institutional purity. What is more, to place oneself at any cost outside the State in the thought that one is thereby situated outside power (which is impossible) can often be the best means of *leaving the field open for statism*: in short, it often involves a retreat in the face of the enemy precisely on this strategically crucial terrain.

⁷ *La volonté de savoir*, op. cit., pp. 123ff.

⁸ Op. cit.

⁹ Interview with Foucault in *Révoltes logiques*, No. 4, Winter 1977.

The State Personnel

The above analyses will become still clearer if we now turn to the state personnel. Investigation will here show at one and the same time that class struggles traverse and constitute the State; that they assume a specific form within the State; and that this form is bound up with the material framework of the State.

Class contradictions are also inscribed within the State through *internal divisions of the state personnel in the broad sense of the term* (the various administrative, judicial, military, police and other state bureaucracies). This personnel constitutes a *social category* with a characteristic unity that results from the organization and relative autonomy of the State. Nevertheless, it is not a social group existing alongside or above classes: it has a class place and is therefore internally divided. This class place is distinct from the class origin of the state personnel (i.e., from the classes out of which it emerges): it refers to the position of the personnel in the social division of labour, such as it crystallizes in the state framework (in the form, amongst others, of the specific reproduction of the division between intellectual and manual labour at the very heart of the intellectual labour concentrated in the State). It is a question of *bourgeois* class affiliation or place for the upper reaches of this personnel, and of *petty-bourgeois* affiliation for the intermediate and subaltern echelons of the state apparatuses.

The contradictions and divisions within the power bloc are therefore reflected in the upper reaches of the state personnel.

Moreover, the petty-bourgeois class affiliation of large sections of the personnel entails that *it is necessarily affected by popular struggles*. Contradictions between the dominant and dominated classes reverberate as gaps between these sections of the state personnel and the strictly bourgeois summit, thus manifesting themselves in the shape of cracks, splits and divisions within the personnel and apparatuses of the State. To be sure, such divisions depend not only on the general relationship of forces, but also on the characteristic demands of the personnel within the inner-state division of labour. And, to be sure, contradictions between the dominant and dominated classes are reflected in a complex manner within the state personnel, given its specificity as a distinct social category. But this in no way prevents class contradictions from existing within it. The struggles of the popular masses do not traverse the state personnel only in those cases where the masses are physically present in the state apparatuses. Such would indeed be true if it were merely a question of utilizing pressures and contacts to win over groups and ensembles standing above or alongside the social classes. But the class struggle is present in the state apparatuses even when it is expressed in them from a distance: by virtue of its class affiliation, the state personnel is from the beginning present in the class struggle. Now, the struggle of the various popular classes traverses the State in a differential fashion: given the petty-bourgeois class affiliation of the intermediate and subaltern echelons of the state apparatuses, the latter are directly affected by the contradictions and diverse positions of the petty bourgeoisie in its relations with the dominant classes. The struggles of the working class generally reverberate in these apparatuses through its relations of conflict or alliance with the petty bourgeoisie.

Thus, the struggles of the popular masses constantly call into question the unity of the state personnel as a category in the service of the existing power and hegemonic fraction of the dominant classes. Their struggles assume quite specific forms; being moulded in the material framework of the State and following the texture of its relative autonomy, they do not correspond univocally or point for point to the divisions of the class struggle. Often they take the

form of 'quarrels' among members of the various state apparatuses and branches, resulting from cracks and reorganizations of the State in the general context of class contradictions; or they may appear as frictions among various cliques, fractions or organs of the State within each of its branches and apparatuses. Even when class positions reverberate within the state personnel through direct and more conspicuous politicization, this always follows characteristic paths – both because of the peculiar manner in which the social division of labour is reproduced within a given state apparatus (for example, the process assumes different forms in the army, the educational system, the police and the Church) and because of the character of the ideological mechanisms located within each apparatus.

The dominant ideology, which is reproduced and inculcated by the State, also serves as the *internal cement* of the state apparatuses and their personnel. In this ideology, a neutral State appears as the representative of the general will and interest, and the arbiter among struggling classes: the state administration or judicial system stands above classes; the army is the pillar of the nation, the police the guarantor of republican order and civil liberties, and the state administration is the motive force of efficiency and general well-being. Although the dominant ideology takes this form within the state apparatuses, it does not hold undivided sway. For the ideological sub-ensembles of the dominated classes are also crystallized in these apparatuses, albeit under the dominance of the ruling ideology. The themes of the latter are often interpreted by whole sections of the state personnel as defining their duty to establish social justice and 'equality of opportunity' among citizens, to restore an 'equilibrium' in favour of 'the weak', and so on. Popular struggles naturally lift the veil on the real nature of the State for those of its agents who are already disposed to see more clearly by their class affiliation. Such struggles therefore considerably accentuate divisions, contradictions and splits within the state personnel, the more so as they are very often articulated to the specific demands of the personnel.

All this remains true despite the limits to the 'politicization' of the state personnel that derive from the manner in which the class struggle is reflected within it.

Agents of the state personnel who go over to the side of the popular masses often live their revolt in the terms of the dominant ideology, such as it is inscribed in the framework of the State. What frequently brings them into conflict with the dominant classes and the upper reaches of the State is the hold of big economic interests over the State, which they see as threatening its role as guarantor of socio-economic 'order' and 'efficiency' and as destroying state 'authority' and the function of the traditional state 'hierarchies'. For example, they may interpret the theme of democratization of the State not in terms of popular intervention in public affairs, but as the restoration of their own role as arbiters standing above social classes. If they call for 'decolonization' of the State with regard to big economic interests, they may have in mind a return to a supposedly virgin State that will allow them to assume their fitting role of political leadership.

Thus, even sections of the state personnel which go over to the popular masses do not challenge the reproduction of the social division of labour within the state apparatus (i.e., the process of bureaucratic hierarchization); nor *a fortiori* do they normally challenge the political division between rulers and ruled that is embodied in the State. In other words, they do not radically call into question their own place and role in relation to the popular masses. Indeed, nothing is clearer than the profound distrust which mass initiatives for self-management or direct democracy awaken in sections of the personnel otherwise favourable to democratization of the State.

These limits to the politicization of the state personnel are nothing other than the effects produced upon it by the material framework of the State; they are thus consubstantial with its own role in the social division of labour. The inherent limits to the practices of the state personnel can be driven back then *only insofar as this institutional framework is radically transformed*. Contrary to a whole series of illusions, the mere leftward shift of a section of the

state personnel is far from enough to transform the relationship between the State and the popular masses. Nor does the solution lie in mere replacement of the state personnel – whether through occupation of the key posts by militants ‘devoted to the cause’ of the popular masses, or, more prosaically, through democratization of personnel recruitment in favour of agents of popular *class origin*. Such measures are not unimportant, but they are secondary to the basic problem of transforming the relation of the State to the popular masses. In the absence of such transformation, we can be sure that the new personnel will end up, or even begin, by rising to the heights of its functions and reproducing the practices that flow from the structure of the State. There are abundant historical examples of this process.

If the State must be transformed to make possible a change in the practices of its personnel, *to what extent can the personnel who swing over to the side of the popular masses be relied upon in the process of transforming the state apparatus?* Of course, we should stress here the resistances of this section of the personnel, not to speak of those who remain loyal to their role as guard-dogs of the power bloc. In most cases, because of its place in the social division of labour embodied by the State, the personnel only goes over to the side of the popular masses if it is possible to maintain a certain state continuity, at least in the initial period. Indeed, it often swings over precisely in order to maintain that continuity which seems to it to be challenged by the hold of big economic interests or ‘fiefdoms’ over the State, and by the splits and revolts that this provokes in the social or ‘national’ body. This attitude, which gives constant proof of its reality, is not bound up only with the defence of evident corporatist privileges. It is true that the state bureaucracy also seeks to defend interests peculiar to its own position, so that we can speak of an ‘interest in stability’ characterizing the entire personnel.¹⁰ But that is not the essential point. In a parallel process to the significant contemporary expansion of state personnel, the very material framework of the State appears invariably to impose limits on the process. All these phenomena have political consequences for the transition to democratic socialism. In particular, we have to ask how

it is possible to base oneself on the presently decisive factor of leftward politicization of large sections of the state personnel – to base oneself on this process while taking account of its limits and ‘dealing gently’ with a personnel always liable to swing over to the right, but without for a moment losing sight of the necessary transformations of the State. This leads us on to the problem of the forms, means and rhythm of the transformation of this apparatus.

To conclude, only this theoretical conception of the capitalist State can explain its differential forms and transformations. It alone is able to articulate effects on the State produced, on the one hand, by changes in the relations of production and social division of labour and, on the other hand, by changes in class struggles, especially political struggles. It is only by conceiving the inscription of political domination in the material framework of the State as the condensation of a relationship of forces that we can break with dogmatic formalism of the kind: ‘Every State is a State of the bourgeoisie’, and grasp the complex role of political struggle in the historical reproduction of the State. I shall content myself with recalling the fields that application of the preceding analyses can help to clarify.

1. First of all, we should consider the specificity of the State and its various branches and apparatuses in any given country – a specificity which manifests itself throughout the historical reproduction and transformations of the State. Although the French State, for example, realizes the general determinations of the capitalist State with regard to the character and transformations of the relations of production, it nevertheless presents certain particularities that mark it throughout these transformations. In turn, these particularities can only be grasped if we consider the institutional framework of the State, and of its various apparatuses, as the condensation of the political relations that have marked the French social formation. Of course, in their constitution and transformation, the school, army and ideological apparatuses of the State in France exhibit a materiality bound up with the relations of production and social division of labour, as well as with the modifications undergone by the capitalist school, the capitalist

army, and the capitalist ideological apparatuses. At the same time, however, this materiality refers to the political relations of the social formation. It is impossible to grasp the peculiar framework of the school in France unless we consider it as the condensation of particular relations between the bourgeoisie and the (old and new) petty bourgeoisie. This is also true of the army (in which relations between the bourgeoisie and the peasantry are of crucial significance), and of the ideological apparatuses (relations between the bourgeoisie and intellectuals), to say nothing of that celebrated Jacobin-statist centralism which refers to the institutional specificity of the state bureaucracy-administration (whose materiality would require a similar kind of analysis) and to its place among other apparatuses. This in turn refers not only to the specific relations between bourgeoisie and working class in France, but also to the French Revolution and, further still, to the peculiarities of the relationship between bourgeoisie and landed nobility under the absolutist State.

2. The next question is the transformations of the State according to the stage and phase of capitalism, as well as the different forms taken by the State and the regime. Condensed within the State are, for example, differentiations in the power bloc and relationships of force among its components; shifts in hegemony from one class or fraction to another; changes in the character and representation of social classes, in the relations of the power bloc with supporting classes (petty bourgeoisie, peasantry) and in the organization of the working class and its strategic relations with the bourgeoisie. These are all imprinted in the organization of each state apparatus; in the relative autonomy of the State with regard to the dominant classes; in the functioning and the form of contradictions within the State; in the configuration of its organizational framework and the domination of one particular apparatus over others; in shifts in the limits between repressive, ideological and economic apparatuses; in permutations in the various functions of the State; and in the organization of the state personnel. This condensation of political struggle in the State therefore marks differences:

(a) Between state forms in the various stages and phases of capitalism: the liberal State of competitive capitalism, the interventionist State of imperialist-monopoly capitalism, and the State of the present phase of monopoly capitalism;

(b) Between the parliamentary-democratic State and the exceptional State (various forms of fascism, military dictatorship and Bonapartism), according to these stages or phases;

(c) Between the diverse forms of the parliamentary-democratic State (presidential regime, parliamentarianism, etc.) and between the diverse forms of the exceptional state.

3. Only this line of research, then, allows us to analyse the current form of the State in the developed capitalist countries: namely, *authoritarian statism*. This will be the subject of the next and final section.

¹⁰ Claus Offe, *Strukturprobleme des kapitalistischen Staates*, 1973; see also Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimationsprobleme in Spätkapitalismus*, 1973.

Part Three

State and Economy Today

People see, feel and continually refer to the economic role of the present-day State. But certain theorists of power still do not concern themselves with such coarse subjects, even if this does not prevent them from holding forth on Princes, Despots and Masters. They occasionally deplore, in passing, the phenomena of inflation, unemployment and economic crisis, but these are hardly relevant in the higher spheres of Power, State and the Political in which they move. Let us leave them in their clouds: for the economic role of the State is terrifyingly real.

Analysis of the capitalist State and capitalist power, in their constitutive relations with the economy, cannot stop at the level of their articulation with the relations of production and the social division of labour as general realities of capitalist society. The reproduction of the latter is expressed in state economic functions, according to the precise stage and phase of capitalism; whether it is a question of repressive violence, ideological inculcation, disciplinary normalization, the organization of space and time or the creation of consent, the activity of the State is related as a whole to these economic functions properly so called. This holds good more than ever for the prodigious phenomenon of *statism* which we are witnessing today.

If we are to avoid mere banalities, we cannot understand statism without examining the economic functions of the present-day State. This is what I shall now begin to do, following the method of successive approximation that seems to be rigorously necessary in order not to confuse issues. I shall therefore concentrate on the State's role in the overaccumulation-devalorization of capital and in

the management-reproduction of labour power. Yet statism is an essentially political reality. We shall comprehend its precise scope only in the following sections, where I treat it more specifically by going into particular aspects connected with the transformation of classes and of their mutual relations; with political struggles and the recent economic crisis as expressed in a crisis of politics and the State; and with the strictly political effects of state economic interventions. We shall be able to define the full relevance and many-sided object of the State's economic role by grasping these and other characteristics.

Why, if political aspects are so important, do I propose to make a distinct analysis of this economic role? Well, this role does after all exhibit a certain specificity: it involves particular aspects and therefore raises problems of special concern to the Left, regarding both its general political framework and, it goes without saying, the situation that would arise if it came to power in France or elsewhere. But while this kind of state activity is quite specific, it is not thereby lacking in political content: we shall demonstrate this precisely by dealing with such activity in its original materiality. It is not by fleeing into politicism that we shall combat the *left technocratism* which is currently assuming such sizeable proportions.

Finally, although I shall confine myself in this section to state economic functions, I shall not examine them in an exhaustive manner. On this question, Marxist research already disposes of rigorous analyses that I shall not repeat. Given the current ideological conjuncture, it is necessary to stress this clearly and without hesitation. Our knowledge of a number of points concerning monopoly capitalism and the present economic involvement of the State – points that have become virtually self-evident – is exclusively attributable to Marxist theory and to the long struggle it continues to wage against official 'economic science' (including the neo-liberal variant of the latter). I would even say that, despite the criticisms we can make – and which I have made – of the Third International's theorization of the State, it had the undeniable and important merit of clarifying some essential aspects of the economic role of the State.

In this field too, people have for ages been proclaiming that Marxism is surpassed by the ‘present’ economic reality of capitalism. Based on post-war capitalist growth, such assertions have in essence a single *leitmotif*: Marxism, which as a matter of fact did lay stress on the economic role of the State, is supposed to have underestimated that role; and the State itself is supposed to have achieved harmonious reproduction under an organized or planned capitalism now exempt from major crises. This line of argument has been popularized in France by Raymond Aron. But it may also be found in Castoriadis, who, though somewhat closer to ourselves, had the temerity as recently as 1974 to make the following ridiculous statement: ‘Now, the experience of the last twenty years suggests that periodical crises of overproduction are not at all inevitable under modern capitalism, except in the extremely attenuated form of minor, passing “recessions” ... Marx’s economic theory “overlooks” the effects of the gradual organization of the capitalist class, the purpose of which is precisely to master the “spontaneous” tendencies of the economy.’¹ We have seen since then what is the truth of the matter!

¹ *L’institution imaginaire de la société*, op. cit., p. 22.

On the Economic Functions of the State

It is now quite commonplace then – and not only in the context of Marxist discussions – to lay stress on state provisions for further accumulation and reproduction of capital. But such activity did not begin with the State of monopoly capitalism: the so-called ‘liberal’ State of competitive capitalism also played an important economic role. As regards the present-day State, its economic role is not merely the outcome of unilinear accumulation of economic functions, added to one another throughout the history of capitalism. By virtue of a number of breaks, the present-day State is qualitatively different both from the liberal State and from the State of the previous phases of monopoly capitalism.

In order to locate this difference, we have to grasp exactly the mode in which the space of the political (the State) is currently articulated with that of the economy and the reproduction of capital; we must also grasp the effects of such articulation on the *very delimitation of the respective spaces* of the State and the economy. It is not at all a question of two mutually limiting sites or spaces which have remained essentially the same throughout the history of capitalism, and which differ only in that one (the State) has more and more ‘intervened’ in the other (the economy). In other words, the difference does not refer to gradual and increasing interpenetration of two spaces, each with virtually unchanging contours.

The space, the object, and hence the content of the political and the economy change as a function of the mode of production; they also vary according to the precise stage and phase of capitalism, insofar as the latter is a mode of production characterized by expanded reproduction. The current modification of the respective spaces of the economic and the political constitutes the 'transformed form' of their separation under capitalism. It is a relative separation and is therefore not currently being abolished by the State's decisive intervention in the economy. (If, on the other hand, present transformations were seen merely as the growing interpenetration of two intrinsically limited fields, then it would be tempting to argue that the phenomenon is indeed being abolished.) The separation of the economy and the State is reproduced in new forms to the extent that the configuration of these two domains undergoes modification.

We should therefore be wary of any topographical and figurative representation of the relations between State and economy. In point of fact, Engels was among those responsible for introducing such an image, since he described the efficacy of the State of his time by reference to its role in maintaining and reproducing the 'general external conditions' of production.² This designation suggests that, at least during a certain period of capitalism, the relations between State and economy were external ones; whereas, in reality, the capitalist separation of State and economy was never anything other than the specifically capitalist form of the State's presence in the relations of production. It is only with this explicit reservation that we can go on using the normal term state 'intervention' in the economy; otherwise it would threaten to connote precisely the image of externality. Were we to take literally the above expression of Engels, there would always be a danger lest we locate the difference between the liberal State and the contemporary State in the fact that the former merely intervened on the periphery of the economy, while the latter now aims directly at its centre. According to this conception, the State's targets in the economy undergo change, but economic space itself remains immutable.

Now, the State's present role with regard to the accumulation and reproduction of capital is inscribed in the very modification of the

respective spaces of State and economy. By virtue of changes in the relations of production, the division of labour, the reproduction of labour-power, and the extraction of surplus value, a number of previously 'marginal' fields (training of labour-power, town-planning, transport, health, the environment, etc.) are directly integrated, in an expanded and modified form, into the very space-process of the reproduction and valorization of capital. Precisely to the extent that such integration takes place the State's role in these fields assumes a fresh meaning. It is this transformation of the economic space-process which shifts the targets of state activity and brings the State increasingly to bear on the heart of the reproduction of capital. In a parallel movement, the space of the State expands and changes to the extent that whole areas of the valorization of capital and reproduction of labour power (the areas of public and nationalized capital, amongst others) are directly inserted in the State. One reason why the State now plays the role in the economy that it does is that we are no longer dealing with the same State as before.

Insofar as these economic activities of the State are correlated with an alteration in its own space, they can by no means be considered in isolation. Such activities are not merely grafted from outside on to an immutable state reality: they must be grasped in their specific place within the overall reorganization of the State. But the reverse is also true. Be they repressive, ideological or of another kind, the functions of the State cannot be considered in isolation from its newly-defined economic role.

Furthermore, in the stage of competitive capitalism, and even in the early phases of monopoly capitalism, the State's strictly economic functions were *subordinated*, though not reduced, especially to its repressive and ideological functions. The State was mainly involved in materially organizing the socio-political space of capital accumulation: its more specifically economic interventions could easily be modulated to fit the exigencies of accumulation. Now, given that the State's present role in the economy alters the political space as a whole, economic functions henceforth occupy the *dominant place* within the State. Not only does this global

modification of political space overlap the dominance of economic functions within the State, but it also denotes the meaning of that very dominance itself. It is not simply a question of new economic activities that dominate, as such, other immutable activities. *The totality of operations of the State are currently being reorganized in relation to its economic role.* This is true not only of ideological-repressive measures, but also of state activity in the fields of disciplinary individualization and corporality, the elaboration of strategic discourse, and the production of science. All these developments give rise to considerable institutional transformations, which affect the state apparatuses as a whole and whose guiding thread is precisely the contemporary economic role of the State.

Today more than ever, it is quite impossible to dissolve the State's economic functions into such others as the exercise of legitimate violence and the reproduction-inculcation of the dominant ideology. Its economic functions are directly articulated to the specific rhythm of the accumulation and reproduction of capital. Indeed, so specific are they that certain major contradictions within the State are now located between its economic role and its role in maintaining order and organizing consent. To a certain degree, these functions follow a logic of their own. They can no longer be bent to conform with the exigencies of public order: for economic measures themselves create disorders that the State finds hard to master. Nor can they any more be subordinated to the organization of consent: for by pointing up the enthrallment of the State to the interests of capital, they challenge the image of the State as guarantor of the general well-being and interest.

If things are so, it is because the economic involvement of the State is now, to a certain extent, *incompressible*: the State can no longer avoid the effects of these economic functions simply by not fulfilling them. To a degree that may vary with the case and conjuncture in question, the very rhythm of capital accumulation now directly imposes these functions on the State. It is more and more difficult for the State to model economic strategy on its general policy for organizing hegemony. It still has to take decisions that are absolutely crucial for the reproduction of capital, even

when this creates serious problems with regard to hegemony. For its decisions sharpen contradictions within the power bloc and between that bloc and the dominated classes, becoming a major factor in crises which thereby go beyond a mere economic crisis. This *rigidity* of the contemporary State – a phenomenon linked to the strictly correlative expansion of state space and the space-process of the reproduction of capital – significantly limits the available political choices and the field of tactics capable of reproducing class hegemony. Through its expansion, the State does not become more powerful, but on the contrary more dependent, with regard to the economy; for such expansion corresponds to a development whereby the totality of socio-economic fields is subordinated to the capital accumulation process. Every attempt to make state economic activity as a whole depend exclusively on the deliberate choices and tactics of ‘politicians’ involves ‘overpoliticization’ of the actions of the State.

However, while the capital accumulation process now directly dictates the rhythm of state activity, it finds expression in the State only to the extent that it is articulated to and inserted into its global policy. Every state economic measure therefore has a political content – not only in the general sense that it assists in capital accumulation and exploitation, but also in the sense that it is necessarily adapted to the political strategy of the hegemonic fraction. Not only are the State’s politico-ideological functions now subordinated to its economic role, but its economic functions directly involve reproduction of the dominant ideology. One illustration of this is the shift in the dominant ideology towards the technocratic image of the State as guarantor of growth and well-being – that is to say, towards the ideology of the Welfare State. Accordingly, the present-day State displays contradictions both between its economic actions and ideological operations, and at the very heart of its economic actions: in particular, those which are quite directly linked with the exigencies of monopoly accumulation enter into contradiction with those whose purpose is to organize the consent of the dominated classes through realizing unstable

compromises. In other words, what is involved is an *economic policy* that is in itself prodigiously contradictory.

It is therefore necessary to avoid a dual trap: we must neither 'overpoliticize' state economic activity by reducing it, in an idealist manner, to the political will of the members and leaders of the hegemonic fraction; nor treat this activity, in economistic fashion, as isolated from overall state policy by virtue of the inner necessities of 'production' or 'the growing technological complexity' of contemporary societies.

The functions of the State are embodied in the institutional materiality of its apparatuses: the specificity of functions entails *specialization of the corresponding apparatuses* and leads to the appearance of particular forms of the social division of labour within the State itself.

This specialization gave rise to a conception which differentiated between repressive and ideological state apparatuses. Now, the basic error of this conception was the fact that it restricted the State to the exercise of repression and reproduction of the dominant ideology. In reality, there are a number of state apparatuses that pre-eminently fulfil functions other than repression and reproduction of the dominant ideology. Moreover, state apparatuses whose purpose is other than economic intervention also play an economic role: for example, the state administration, the judiciary, the army, the school, the Church, and the media. Together with a whole series of state activities, this economic role used to be completely obscured in favour of repression and reproduction of the dominant ideology.

Even in previous forms of the capitalist State, when its involvement in the economy was subordinated above all to repression and reproduction of the dominant ideology, there could yet exist within the State a genuinely *specialized economic apparatus*. But today the question is posed more clearly: the dominant place of economic functions within the State has given rise to new forms of specialization in certain state bodies charged with carrying out these functions. Unless we break with the analogical image according to which the state apparatuses are divided into watertight fields, we

cannot grasp the reorganization, extension and consolidation of the state economic apparatus as the restructuring principle of state space. This reorganization is apparent at once in the heightened specialization of particular state apparatuses and branches (from the Plan Commissariat through the *Conseil Economique et Social* to the statistical and other economic institutions); in the creation of unified networks operating across the boundaries of the various state apparatuses; in the establishment of distinct circuits within the various state apparatuses (specifically economic commissions or boards operating in each state apparatus or branch, from the army to the school and courts system) whether at central, regional or local level; and lastly, in the emergence of specialist bodies of the various state apparatuses (from the parliamentary Finance Committee in the field of the army and nuclear weaponry, to the technical and adult education branches of the educational apparatus).

This state economic apparatus assumes a quite specific institutional framework, since it increasingly concentrates even those economic functions which used to be divided among various apparatuses. It is directly linked into the accumulation-reproduction process of capital, and is thus the most affected by the rhythm and contradictions peculiar to that process. Suffering the most from the rigidity imposed on the State by the contemporary process of production and reproduction of capital, this apparatus also displays the limits and restrictions of the political options and tactics available for organizing class hegemony. Since it is the least subject to the conjunctural hazards of government policy it often follows a specific logic in partial contradiction with general state policy; this is testified by experiences in the United States and the major European countries during the last two decades. It is this apparatus which most clearly demonstrates the *continuity* of the State, even though it is the most directly embroiled both in the internal contradictions of the power bloc and in contradictions between the bloc and the dominated classes.

Of course, the state economic apparatus is currently one of the privileged centres of the monopoly fraction that exercises hegemony

within the power bloc; and this is not due to chance. But the impact of this apparatus does not derive only from its place in the configuration of state power; it plays an organic role in reproducing the *overall cycle* of capital in *all* its aspects and in *every* domain covered by that cycle. Thus, the other fractions of capital are also represented within this apparatus: if monopoly capital occupies a privileged position, it does so partially insofar as this apparatus fulfils the general economic functions of the State in the present phase of capitalism. For the moment I will simply point out that, contrary to a whole series of illusions, modifications in state power (especially the renewed challenge to the hegemony of monopoly capital) cannot find expression automatically or mechanically in changes to the specific materiality of this or any other apparatus.

Now, just as we cannot conceive of 'pure' state economic actions somehow separated from its other missions, so we cannot conceive of the state economic apparatus as being separated from its other apparatuses and mechanisms. Of whatever kind these latter may be, they also carry out economic functions and, within the reorganization of political space, undergo restructuring in relation to the formation and functioning of the economic apparatus: institutional materiality is imparted to the situation whereby functions concentrated in the state economic apparatus enjoy dominance over the other functions of the State. The current role of this apparatus accounts in part for the precipitate and accelerated decline of parliament and the institutions of representative democracy in favour of the Executive, as well as for the diminishing role of political parties in comparison with the bureaucracy and state administrations, and other such phenomena. It would be possible to relate the whole history of changes in the army, school system, administration or judiciary to the formation and consolidation of the state economic apparatus.

Hence, this apparatus, too, fully participates in the global political mechanism of the State. It constitutes a political device both insofar as it fosters capital accumulation and insofar as it gives specific expression to the political compromises and tactics conducted within the State. To a doubtless uneven extent, this political

character impregnates *the reality and functions of the state economic apparatus as a whole*. It would be quite false to regard the apparatus (and its functions) as split into two distinct parts: a *techno-administrative sub-apparatus* which is politically more or less neutral and which discharges techno-economic functions crucial to each and every 'production process'; and a politico-economic *super-apparatus* exclusively concentrating state provisions in favour of the hegemonic fraction of monopoly capital.

We should dwell a little longer on this extremely tenacious illusion of the *dual nature* of the State, such as it is expressed in analysis of the state economic apparatus. Let us first recall that the illusion is rooted in a techno-economistic conception of the production process itself: the productive forces are grasped at a level so to speak autonomous and distinct from the relations of production, while the class struggle in the economy is confined to the relations of production. According to this view, the basic social contradiction is that between the development – or, in a celebrated term, the 'socialization' – of the productive forces, and the (private) relations of production; this split between productive forces and relations of production is then situated in a so to speak duplex State, which in turn divides the economic apparatus *into two*. On the one hand, there is an 'expanded' economic apparatus corresponding to the development of the productive forces, and fulfilling not only the functions which every State supposedly discharges vis-à-vis the productive forces, but even socialist functions suited to the 'socialization' of those forces: this, then, is essentially a techno-administrative apparatus to be developed, and not transformed, in the transition to socialism. On the other hand, there is a politico-economic apparatus corresponding to the relations of production and the class struggle – a monopoly super-State which does have to be transformed. The main contradiction within the economic apparatus is supposed to be that which opposes these two parts.

These analyses are not in fact correct. Although the productive forces possess a materiality of their own which cannot be ignored, they never exist except in unity with, and under the primacy of, determinate relations of production. The class struggle is from the

beginning lodged in the very heart of the labour process; and the basic contradiction of capitalism is the class contradiction between the exploiters and the exploited. There are no economic functions relating to 'production in general' which every State has to fulfil; economic functions are always invested in the class struggle and therefore have a political character and content. The whole texture of the state economic apparatus has a political character. Its basic contradiction is located between tactics essentially polarized towards the interests of capital and its hegemonic monopoly fraction and tactics imposed by the struggle of the exploited classes. It is a contradiction which, in varying degrees, traverses the networks and branches of the state economic apparatus *in their entirety*.

It now remains for us to elucidate the diverse and seemingly quite heterogeneous economic functions of the State *in their organic articulation*, rather than in the form of descriptive addition or accumulation.

Our investigation must take as its *guiding thread the tendency of the falling rate of profit*: state intervention in the economy should be essentially understood as the *introduction of counter-tendencies* to this tendency, in relation to the new coordinates whereby the average rate of profit is established in the present phase of monopoly capitalism. In the last analysis, all state economic intervention is articulated around this basic pole. However, left-wing students of the question do not always agree that this tendency of the falling rate of profit is still at work in capitalist formations. I do not intend here to enter into the debate. Let me simply point out that a number of objections to Marx's theory generally miss their target, since they focus on the concrete, empirical and measurable expression of this fall, whereas what is really involved is a tendency. Even when it does not take concrete form, it still remains active and explains the introduction of *counter-tendencies* which thwart this tendency by preventing it from concretely manifesting itself.

Now, we can grasp this falling tendency as the guiding thread only if we are clear that, insofar as it directly designates not the extraction of surplus-value (i.e. exploitation) but the distribution of surplus-value (profit), it has value only as an *index* and *symptom* of

profound changes in the relations of production and social division of labour – that is to say, in the class struggle focussing on exploitation. In other words, state operations liable to introduce counter-tendencies to the falling rate of profit enter into the production and reproduction process of which that fall is itself the index: the falling tendency is ultimately nothing but the expression of popular struggles against exploitation. Once this is admitted, it is not only legitimate, but absolutely indispensable, to take the tendency of the falling rate of profit as the central reference-point.

However, our problems have only just begun, for there are several counter-tendencies to this fall. Of these the two principal ones are: *devalorization* of a portion of constant capital, leading to a rise in the average rate of profit; and *an increase in the rate of exploitation or rate of surplus-value* (training of the labour force, technological innovations, etc.) – which is designated as an increase in *relative surplus-value*. This raises two questions. First, is it legitimate to refer to these two counter-tendencies (and especially the first), given that such devalorization directly concerns not the extraction of surplus-value, but the mere transfer and redistribution of surplus-value within capital by the mechanism of profit? Second, if we do have to refer to both counter-tendencies, can we treat them at the same level – and if not, which plays the *main role*?

As I have often argued, I think that the second problem is the more important. Now, the State's role in the devalorization of certain fractions of constant capital has been emphasized by a number of theorists grouped around the review *Economie et Politique*. In particular, Boccara and Herzog have significantly advanced our knowledge of contemporary economic reality.³ Today, they argue, the bulk of state interventions (various state subsidies and investments, public and nationalized capital) tend to make a portion of capital operate at a level below the average rate of profit, or even at a zero or negative rate; the purpose of this is to favour monopoly capital in the present context of overaccumulation by thwarting the tendency of the falling rate of profit. These analyses are often countered with the misdirected argument that, even if public capital functions in the manner described (which is really

beyond doubt), the process only involves the redistribution and transfer of surplus-value among the components of the capitalist class. That is certainly true. But the counter-tendency in question is no less real and crucial for all that, referring to, among other things, intense struggles within the capitalist class and to cracks in the power bloc. The real problems lie elsewhere:

1. They are raised by the need to define the exact place of this counter-tendency. First of all, we must be wary of the illusion according to which statized capital is, by its very public nature, short-circuited and neutralized in the overall reproduction of social capital, in such a way that it does not form, or no longer forms, part of capital. For statized capital continues to exploit (public enterprises exploit their workers) and thus to produce surplus-value; indeed, through being devalorized, it permits the transfer of surplus-value to other sectors of capital. Statized public capital is therefore still dependent, in the form of *state capitalism*, on the *economic property* of the capitalist class – that property which, as distinct from legal property, is constitutive of the relations of production. In the framework of a capitalist system and State, this is the case even when such capital does not legally belong to a particular individual capitalist. Herein lies the whole significance of the present discussion on the Left concerning the meaning and limits of nationalization in a capitalist regime. What is really at issue cannot be reduced to the alternative of *statization* or *nationalization*. On the Left, virtually everyone seems to agree, or says that he agrees, that nationalization must go beyond mere statization to involve workers in their own management. Now, however much one differentiates between statization and nationalization, the nobility of the second term should not make us forget that, in a capitalist regime, all nationalization is distinct from effective *socialization*, and that this constitutes the really fundamental distinction. By transferring the means of production from the possession and economic ownership of capital to the real control of the workers, socialization entails not only a change in state power, but also substantial modifications in the relations of production and the state apparatus. In the long run,

only socialization can be a genuine alternative to statization; the example of Eastern Europe should be enough to remind us of this.

We should also make clear that state involvement in the devalorization of capital (for the purpose of increasing the average rate of profit) does not serve exclusively to augment the superprofits of monopoly capital, even though the monopoly fraction does reserve the lion's share for itself. State activity cannot entirely circumvent the tendency of the equalization of the rate of profit among monopoly and non-monopoly fractions taken as a whole. Some fractions of non-monopoly capital also benefit from the increase in the average rate of profit following devalorization, even if the State strives to block the tendency of equalization by maintaining the overall inequality of the profits of monopoly and non-monopoly capital. (As we know, non-monopoly capital continues to form part of the capitalist power bloc.)

2. However, precisely insofar as the statization-de valorization of capital concerns, in essence, only redistribution and transfer of total surplus-value among sections of capital, *the principal and dominant long-term counter-tendency* to the falling rate of profit is *the state-inspired rise in the rate of surplus-value and exploitation*. To be sure, the relative weight of the two counter-tendencies also depends on the conjuncture in the class struggle of each social formation (especially on the resistance of the working class). Nevertheless the second counter-tendency tends to dominate, because we are currently witnessing, above all in the developed capitalist countries, a clear shift away from extensive exploitation of labour and absolute surplus-value (based on wage-levels and the length of the working day) towards intensive exploitation of labour and relative surplus value. Correlated with the internationalization of the labour processes (whereby extensive exploitation of labour is concentrated in the dominated countries), with increased submission of labour power to capitalist relations, and with the growing primacy of 'dead labour' over 'living labour', this shift involves an increase in labour productivity and technological innovation. It assigns to the State an essential role *in the expanded reproduction of labour-power* – reproduction whose space extends well beyond the training process.

Of crucial importance today are a whole series of state activities in relation to scientific research and technological innovation, restructuring of industry, education and occupational training, as well as in such areas as housing, health, transport, social welfare, urban development, and collective consumption. Although seemingly quite heterogeneous, all these fields are articulated around the State's role in the expanded reproduction of labour-power. Such reproduction is no longer simply the 'condition' of exploitation; it is located at the very heart of surplus-value production, by virtue of the trend away from extensive exploitation and absolute surplus-value towards intensive exploitation and relative surplus-value (productivity of labour). Still more than devalorization of certain fractions of capital, it is an increase in exploitation through expanded reproduction-regulation of labour-power that is intended by these measures. This fact has important consequences, allowing us to locate the directly political aspects of these interventions and to mark out the ideological-political questions at stake.

We can thus first of all clarify the domain in which state activity is essentially involved. The reproduction of labour-power takes place within the limits imposed by the relations of production: what is at issue is never merely technical training, but expanded reproduction referring to the social division of labour. State involvement must therefore focus above all on the relations of production themselves – and in such a way as to impose on them those changes which alone enable a rise in the productivity of labour-power and an increase in relative surplus-value.

I have dealt with this question in *Social Classes in Contemporary Capitalism* and shall not here go into it in detail. I shall simply recall that a whole series of state interventions – whether concerned with the restructuring of industry, direct or many-sided aid to certain fractions of capital, or with land development – have a more basic goal than the evident one of distributing and redistributing surplus-value; that is to say, they seek to bring about that change in the relations of production which is the necessary condition for the reproduction of labour-power as a function of a rise in the rate of

exploitation. These measures make of the State the direct promoter of the concentration and centralization of capital – understood as a process which, far from being either simply technical or simply juridical, involves important changes in the relations of production. Thus, the powers and degrees of possession and economic ownership are differentially articulated, within the place occupied by capital and among its various bearers, both at the national level and at the world level (internationalization of capital, multinational companies, and so on). Of course, the process also entails devalorization of certain portions of capital (those which are absorbed or expropriated by others), as well as the transfer of surplus-value from non-monopoly to monopoly capital and from European to American capital. But what is essentially at stake is a rearrangement of the relations of production through a reorganization of the labour process: for example, a change in the shape and boundaries of the various units of production through the constitution of complex units at national and international level, which make possible an ‘integrated’ labour process and production process. In turn, this is the necessary condition for a rise in labour productivity, intensified technological innovation, and application of the results to the labour process. (The various ‘technological revolutions’ always presuppose changes in the relations of production.) In short, such an ‘integrated’ process is a necessary condition for a rise in the exploitation of labour.

By referring to the reproduction of labour power, we are able not only to locate state activity in the primary realm of the relations of production, but also to grasp its precise importance in such spheres as *circulation* and *consumption*. Production (the relations of production) does not fully exhaust the cycle of expanded reproduction of capital, which also comprises distribution, circulation and consumption. But it does occupy a determining place in the overall reproduction cycle: it is production which determines exchange relations on the market (circulation), and not the reverse. Contrary to a whole series of neo-marginalist conceptions, the decisive activity of the State concerns neither the coordinates of the market – the realm of commodity circulation-exchange and price-

formation – nor, still less, the sphere of individual consumption denoted by all the current verbiage on ‘consumer society’. It rather concerns the relations of production themselves.

It should not be forgotten, however, that the State’s involvement in consumption is qualitatively more important than it was in the past. I am referring now not to the supposedly restored ‘primacy’ of the market in consumer societies, but to the precise role of the State in the present-day forms of the reproduction of labour-power. With regard to the current means of such reproduction, the domain of *collective consumption* increasingly has primacy over individual consumption; this is shown by the considerably enhanced role of the indirect wage (measured by the price and quality of the collective means of consumption and of social benefits) in comparison with that of the direct wage distributed by the employer – housing, health, transport, education, collective services and equipment.⁴ It is at these crucial sites of the expanded reproduction of labour-power that the State massively intervenes in consumption. As it has always done, of course, the State also acts upon circulation-consumption in order to transform profit-realization through the sale of commodities (individual consumption), and to expand trade outlets and soluble demand to the advantage of monopoly superprofits (intervention in the field of prices and incomes, taxation, credit, trade outlets, and so on). But while state involvement is growing to be decisive in this domain, it becomes so through publicly financed collective consumption, the purpose of which is to increase relative surplus-value by raising the productivity of labour.

We can now show that the State, through being massively involved in circulation-consumption for the purposes of reproducing labour-power, is drawn more and more to intervene in the articulation of the production cycle (relations of production/labour power) with the cycle of circulation-consumption. It does this by means of its current role in monetary management. We can now also understand why intervention in the field of collective consumption is not a merely techno-economic operation, but involves a crucial political content of much greater scope than is often thought. Here too, state measures do not refer to intrinsically

neutral productive forces, occupying a level of their own and simply diverted *a posteriori* to the benefit of monopoly superprofits by virtue of state power alone (i.e. by virtue of the monopolies' place in the power bloc). No doubt the hegemony of monopoly capital does impose a precise significance on state strategy. But insofar as these interventions concern the overall reproduction of labour-power and refer to structural reorganization of the labour processes, they touch on a deeply-rooted reproduction of the capitalist social division of labour. In its political content, this effective *management-regulation* of labour-power – up to and including the new forms of disciplinary normalization and submission-subjection to capitalist politico-ideological relations – does seem to cut across mere hegemony of the monopolies and to become consubstantial with the hard core of capitalist relations of production. This raises the following question: in the absence of a radical subversion of capitalist relations of production, to what extent can a challenge to the hegemony of monopoly capital succeed by itself in modifying the new forms of reproduction-training of labour-power – in modifying, that is to say, a quite crucial aspect of the State?

We are now at last in a position to define the range of the present tendency towards *statism*. While we are not talking of a uniform and linear tendency, nor are we referring to a conjunctural phenomenon arising out of market vagaries and capable of being reversed simply through a challenge to monopoly hegemony. To a large extent, the growing weight of the State in every field of socio-economic life also seems to cut across the rhythm of the devalorization of capital and to become consubstantial with the new forms of overall reproduction of labour-power.

We can now illustrate all these points by examining more closely the political content of the economic functions of the State.

² Engels' exact term is *die allgemeine äussere Bedingungen*. See *Anti-Dühring*, Marx-Engels Werke, Vol. 20, p. 260.

³ As far as France is concerned, I shall merely mention the works of P. Boccara and Ph. Herzog, as well as those of J.-P. Delilez, H. Claude and J. Lojkine; see also those by C.

Bettelheim, J. Valier, A. Granou, P. Brachet, A. Emmanuel, E. Mandel, C. Palloix, H. Brochier, C. Goux. Lastly, there is the recent book by J. Attali and M. Guillaume, *Le capital et son double*, Paris 1976.

- ⁴ See among others the work by M. Castells, J. Lojkine, A. Chauvenet, C. Liscia, F. Godard, D. Mehl, P. Grevet, E. Preteceille, M. Freyssinet, C. Baudelot, R. Establet, D. Bertaux, C. Topalov, C. Quin and R. Dulong.

Economy and Politics

In order to define the political content which these functions possess in relation to the power bloc itself, we must go to the heart of the matter and pose the following question: *why are certain economic measures taken by the State and not directly by capital itself?* Ought we to see in this purely the influence of ‘economic factors’?

This question appears all the more crucial in light of a quite remarkable fact revealed by careful study of the various capitalist formations: there are virtually no economic functions which can be fulfilled *only* by the State. With the exception of such functions as the levying of taxes, they have all been, or are now, fulfilled either by the State or directly by capital itself, or by both, the precise situation varying with the social formation and the historical period in question. This has been the case from the establishment of the economic infrastructure and the general material ‘conditions’ of production (railways, transport, communications, etc.) through monetary management, housing, health, education, communal assets, and the training of labour-power, to the concrete modalities of the concentration-centralization of capital. The history of state interventionism is neither a homogeneous history covering all the social formations, nor a linear history in which the State progressively accumulates and appropriates certain intrinsically economic activities or fields: it is rather a history of uneven development, unfolding in accordance with the given formations

and marked by both steps forward and steps backward.⁵ This cannot be explained entirely in terms of economic factors.

It is often argued that these functions are fulfilled by the State because they concern fields which are, generally speaking, *unprofitable* for capital itself – that is to say, fields in which the rate of profit on invested capital is lower than the average.

But it should be made clear that what is involved is a *historical* fact. These fields appear as unprofitable for capital only in certain social formations and at certain historical periods, to the extent that state intervention has not yet brought about the conditions in which capital can secure a profit. The phenomenon therefore varies with the social formation and the particular conjuncture, and to a certain degree this variation allows us to account for the uneven development of state intervention.

I repeat: it allows this *to a certain degree*. For this economic factor, which is often used to explain state interventionism as a whole, can in reality only have a limited field of validity.

Let us refer here just to the context of the internationalization of capital – a process which marks the current phase of imperialism and the coordinates within which the average rate of profit is established at an international level (at least within the zone of the dominant countries). The above economic factor is not enough to explain the considerable variations of interventionism in the dominant capitalist countries. It is impossible to show that the development of motorways or telecommunications is currently profitable in Italy and the United States (where it is taken in hand by private capital) and at the same time unprofitable in France (where the State has assumed the overall responsibility). Indeed, the State is involved in domains that are highly profitable for capital: both through nationalization – which is not confined to unprofitable sectors of capital or firms on the verge of bankruptcy – and through a wide range of other interventions relating to research, energy, and so on.

Thus, even when the State acts upon sectors that are unprofitable for capital, its interventions are always situated in a political context and their modalities or scope are marked by the policy of the State.

However, we must now ask ourselves why the State also takes over sectors that are clearly profitable for capital.

First of all, we can be sure that such intervention is often bound up with the *general* coordinates of the reproduction of capital and that it is essential for the reproduction of *social capital as a whole*. In Engels's formulation, according to which the State intervenes to establish and maintain the general conditions of production, the term 'conditions' may now be said to be inapplicable, given that the State goes to the very heart of the reproduction process. But the term 'general' preserves its full relevance, since the object to which it refers (from research to energy, communications and expanded reproduction of labour-power) is indispensable for the bourgeoisie as a whole. Assumption of these functions by any one individual capital, or even fraction of capital, involves considerable risks: the functions themselves may be quite drastically distorted in order to serve particular, short-term profits. (This was shown very clearly by the actions of the oil companies, which aroused such a response in capital as a whole that the State – even Carter in the USA – was forced to take responsibility in the realm of energy.) The deflection may become so sharp that the entire productive apparatus tends to be restructured to the exclusive advantage of certain capitals and to the grave detriment of other capitals or fractions of capital. Such a development will considerably heighten the internal contradictions of the power bloc. It is thus a political necessity that these functions of *general interest* for the bourgeoisie *as a whole* should be discharged by the State.

Even then, of course, state interventionist measures are weighted in favour of the hegemonic fraction of capital, today monopoly capital. The very character of the latter, as well as its overwhelming predominance in the economy, set up specific effects in a statism that is geared to monopolistic overaccumulation. However, this always takes place in the framework of a complex political process whereby a compromise strategy is elaborated within the power bloc by means of the State. Besides, monopoly capital itself is not a fused entity but is traversed by important contradictions: this makes it

necessary for the State to implement political measures that are mainly to the advantage of monopoly capital as a whole.

To a varying degree, this political character, defined in relation to the dominant classes and fractions, affects all the above functions. This is quite apparent not only in the reproduction and heightened control of labour-power – which is the general coordinate of the reproduction of capital as a whole – but also in state measures aiming at the devalorization of certain fractions of constant capital. Here too, there is no intrinsic economic reason why such devalorization should take place exclusively by means of the State. In point of fact, it is constantly taking place in the economic process itself that runs parallel to the State – either through economic crises or through direct action taken by certain capitals (essentially composed of monopoly capital) against certain others essentially composed of non-monopoly capital but also involving monopoly capital. We are talking here of bankruptcies, take-overs and mergers. Whole sections of capital (companies, production units) have to die – for a zero rate of profit spells death for private capital – in order that others may go on living. This happens above all through the State, because neither within capital as a whole nor within monopoly capital itself is there an instance capable of laying down who should make sacrifices so that others may continue to prosper. Moreover, if this process is left to the economic field alone, it assumes wild and violent forms characteristic of the early stage of the concentration of capital. State involvement makes possible a certain political regulation through the elaboration of tactics within the State. (Since, however, an unstable equilibrium of compromises is involved here, the political regulation is always of a relative character.)

These points also apply to the many forms of direct state aid to monopoly capital that work to the detriment of non-monopoly capital (subsidies, public sector orders, preferential charges, etc.). Such measures, too, are inscribed in the general framework of the political relationship of forces between fractions of capital. They encounter the resistance of non-monopoly capital, whose existence as a term of the relationship of forces is expressed in the form of

limitations imposed on pro-monopoly state activity. Indeed, this activity is the subject of sharp negotiations with non-monopoly capital that give rise to various 'palliatives' and 'counter-measures'.

As we see, therefore, the current expansion of the public sector and of state functions does not correspond only to economic necessities. But while the phenomenon in question is of an essentially political character, it cannot be explained simply by the hold of monopoly capital over the State – as if monopoly capital had achieved full unity and excluded non-monopoly capital from the terrain of political hegemony. Although the process is undoubtedly linked with monopoly hegemony, it concerns the more basic forms of the domination of capital as a whole. For it is also a response to the current sharpening of contradictions throughout the terrain of political domination.

Now, the political content of these economic functions concerns above all *the popular masses*. We are dealing here with another series of problems.

Let us pass straight on to the first and, in a sense, the simplest of these problems – one that refers to the most clearly repressive and ideological aspects of the State. Direct state involvement on the side of capital becomes necessary whenever the operation of economics entails recourse to organized violence (various forms of expropriation, certain aspects of the reproduction-management of labour power, etc.) the monopoly of whose legitimate use is held by the capitalist State.

Ideological procedures are of significance in rather a different way. In materializing the ideology according to which it represents a general interest and common welfare situated above classes, the State directly takes on economic functions and, at the same time, disguises their real class content from the popular classes. The more such measures concern intensification of the rate of exploitation (relative surplus-value), the greater the politico-ideological necessity for the State to assume direct responsibility for their application. First, with direct reference to the overaccumulation of capital, we should mention capitalist-type nationalizations that foster the illusions of the popular masses. Through such measures, the

devalorization of capital and its effects on the labour force can easily be represented as technical necessities (as in the case of Renault, for instance), whereas take-overs or bankruptcies (e.g. Lip) raise rather more serious problems. Secondly, and more importantly, there are measures which relate to labour-power. By virtue of their public character (from transport to the system of education-training), these reproduce labour-power to the advantage of capital in a much more effective manner than if capital itself were to take direct and exclusive responsibility for the relevant functions.

Just as the State's role vis-à-vis the popular masses cannot be reduced to a trap or a straightforward ideological mystification, so it cannot be identified with a Welfare State discharging purely 'social' functions. The State organizes and reproduces class hegemony by establishing a variable field of compromises between the dominant and dominated classes; quite frequently, this will even involve the imposition of certain short-term material sacrifices on the dominant classes, in order that their long-term domination may be reproduced. The first stage of capitalism provides the classic example of factory legislation (as well as the abolition of slavery) which captured the attention of Marx. In this case, the State intervened to preserve-reproduce labour-power – which capital, acting against its own long-term interests, was in the process of physically exterminating – and to organize the field of relative surplus-value alongside that of absolute surplus-value. It should never be forgotten that a whole series of economic measures, particularly concerning the expanded reproduction of labour-power, *were imposed on the State by the struggle of the dominated classes*. These struggles revolved around what may be designated by the socially and historically determinate notion of popular 'needs': from social security to policies in relation to unemployment and the entire field of collective consumption. Numerous recent studies⁶ demonstrate that the celebrated social functions of the State directly depend, both for their existence and for their rhythms and modalities, on the intensity of popular mobilization: whether as the effect of struggles or as an attempt to defuse struggles on the part of the State.

This does indeed show that what are involved are not ‘pure’ social measures of a Welfare State. But it also shows that there cannot be *over here* state functions in favour of, and imposed by, the popular masses and *over there* pro-capital economic functions. All measures taken by the capitalist State, even those imposed by the popular masses, are in the last analysis inserted in a pro-capitalist strategy or are compatible with expanded reproduction of capital. The State takes into account the relationship of forces with the dominated classes as well as their specific resistances. But within this framework, it adopts essential measures in favour of expanded reproduction of capital, elaborating them in a political manner such that, through certain concessions to the dominated classes (popular conquests), they may guarantee the reproduction of the class hegemony and domination exercised by the bourgeoisie as a whole over the popular masses. Not only does the State ensure the operation of this mechanism, but it alone is capable of ensuring it: the dominant classes and fractions have shown that they cannot do so, if they are left to themselves and their short-term, contradictory economic-corporative interests. In the long run, the State can serve class hegemony by itself granting certain material demands of the popular masses – demands which, at the moment of their imposition, may assume a quite radical significance (free and universal public education, social security, unemployment benefit, etc.). Once the relationship of forces has changed, these ‘popular gains’ can be progressively stripped of their initial content and character in a covert and mediate fashion. Were such reverses to be applied with regard to socio-economic functions directly discharged by capital, they would threaten to provoke much more serious social explosions.

The above remarks have merely outlined the general contours of the problem. We can now proceed to analyse the political content of state economic functions, preserving as our guiding thread the State’s role in the reproduction-management of labour-power. In this way, we shall be able to understand more clearly why there are no purely ‘techno-social’ state functions vis-à-vis the popular masses. Conversely, we shall be able to locate the economic pertinence of

the State's functions as a whole (including those which appear quite distant from the economy) and to verify the present-day subordination of the State's overall activity to its economic role so defined.

Reproduction of labour-power is a political strategy, since it always involves reproduction of the *social division* of labour; politico-ideological elements always enter into the constitution of this reproduction. First of all, we should consider their repressive aspect: that of the exercise of organized violence. It is impossible to overemphasize the fact that the various 'social' measures taken by the Welfare State with respect to the reproduction of labour-power and the field of collective consumption are at the same time geared to *police-political* management and control of labour-power. The realities are by now well known: social welfare structures, unemployment relief networks and job-placement bureaux; the material organization of 'social' housing space (short-stay housing estates); asylums and hospitals – all these are so many political sites where legal-police control is exercised over labour-power.

To be sure, important transformations are currently under way: the configuration of these sites is changing through a certain de-institutionalization of the 'totalitarian' structures of isolation and parade-ground confinement (the classical workhouses as well as various ghettos and the asylum world). The doors of the old control sites are 'opening' to give way to a new type of statism: that of more flexible networks and circuits spread throughout the social fabric (social welfare; complex structures for taking over responsibility in the neighbourhood and in relation to the family; approved schools; work-therapy centres; day clinics and night clinics; state-sponsored workshops). Castel has provided us with the best analyses of the process whereby disciplinary normalization is being shifted towards these new structures. But he is wrong to suggest that this involves a transition from power in the form of authority-coercion to power in the form of persuasion-manipulation, or from open violence to internalized repression.⁷ We now know that the process corresponds to a considerable redeployment of the *legal-police* network, which, in a new form, duplicates, props up, supports and extends the capillary

diffusion of the circuits of social control: the power of the police, preliminary administrative investigations, control by the courts over the various measures of assistance and surveillance, interpenetration of these circuits and the police apparatus (from remedial classes at school to judges in juvenile courts), centralization of files and intelligence thanks to advances in electronics, duplication of the official police by private surveillance networks. In a certain sense, this process involves a lifting of the traditional boundaries between the normal and the abnormal (i.e., supposedly 'anti-social' elements); thus, control is shifted from the criminal act to the crime-inducing situation, from the pathological case to the pathogenic surroundings, in such a way that each citizen becomes, as it were, an *a priori* suspect or a potential criminal. But this is doubled in a supporting mechanism of police control over the population: each citizen becomes in turn a watcher or potential policeman through an endless series of reports-delations (enquiries into a person's morality prior to his being accorded social benefits). This is 'symbolic' repression indeed.

To this should be added, of course, the politico-ideological content embodied in the reproduction of the dominant ideology and in the division of the popular masses – a process which impregnates these state functions to the very core. The educational and general training measures taken by the State with a view to qualifying or de-skilling labour-power are also marked by a sharpening division between intellectual and manual labour in its full politico-ideological dimension: the purpose of this is to heighten the separation of sections of the popular masses from one another (clerical workers, middle managerial staff, technicians, workers). The organization of space in transport or housing not only reproduces isolation and the ideology of the family cell, but gives a planned structure to division among the popular classes (the wage-earning petty bourgeoisie, the working class, immigrant workers, and others). Health policy follows the same lines; an institution like Social Security is so far from constituting a unified apparatus that it is divided into highly distinct networks according to the class and category involved. Unemployment relief is itself directly geared to

reproduction of the capitalist work ideology: restrictions on benefit do not exclusively depend on the economic imperatives of capital; and in no case must assistance allow claimants to forget the abject and humiliating character of the unemployed worker's situation.

Similar points could be made about state organization of the cultural field and of the realm of leisure and sport. Conversely, the State's role in the training-management-reproduction of labour-power allows us to establish with precision the economic scope of present-day state activity as a whole, including the disciplines of normalization that help to forge capitalist corporality and to shape the individualization of the political body over which power is exercised. It thus allows us to explain the transformations undergone by these disciplines themselves. In order to do this, however, we can hardly refer, like Foucault, to the highly vague notion of 'productivity-maximization' of labour: for how could such a catch-all notion account for that evolution from enclosure to disenclosure which has been noticeable since the beginning of the century and which is currently rushing ahead? In fact, we can only explain this by reference to the core of these changes: namely, the present-day modifications in the labour processes and in the management-reproduction of labour-power. For all these reasons, we have to bring these normalization disciplines into relation with the capitalist social division of labour. This is recognized – I was tempted to say, admitted – by Castel: 'I am quite unable to say anything at all precise on the "causes" of such a movement [from "enclosure" to "disenclosure"], and especially on the elements in the social division of labour which, at the level of the distribution and reproduction of labour-power, appear to drive it forward.'⁸

In recognizing the core of these changes, we have already pointed to the direction in which greater precision should be sought. Generalized enclosure does seem to constitute the privileged form of conditioning-normalization and even training of labour-power at that point when extensive exploitation of labour and absolute surplus-value are predominant. These imply that labour productivity and skills are at a relatively low level; that working-class labour-power occupies a minority and rather isolated position in the

population as a whole; and that exploitation is essentially grounded on rapid physical erosion of easily replenished labour-power.

By contrast, the shift towards intensive exploitation of labour and relative surplus-value entails increased submission of labour-power to capital; expansion of the working class; a rise in the productivity of labour and strengthening of the qualification pole in the permanent process of qualification-deskilling of labour-power; expanded reproduction, in a new form, of the division between intellectual and manual labour; and restructuring of the labour processes in certain industrial branches, through, among other things, the present form of technological innovation. As numerous analysts have demonstrated, these changes essentially correspond to the new and more general 'social functions' of the Welfare State in their aspect of training-management-reproduction of labour-power. Without here going further into the matter, it would appear that we are referred to these same changes by the new forms of conditioning and normalization: by the flexible and capillary spread of disciplinary mechanisms in a population massively subordinated to capital (expansion of the 'real submission' of labour to capital); changes in the methods of educational training; opening-up of the family as the permeable site of a new qualification of labour; decomposition of the boundaries between the normal and the abnormal in a population threatened with permanent structural unemployment and thus potentially 'anti-social' to an intense degree; reproduction of the fissures between authority and decision-execution within an expanded intellectual labour force (new petty bourgeoisie) and in a form other than the rigid despotism of traditional 'closed' organizations which coincided with fissures between manual labour and narrowly-defined intellectual labour; expansion and diffusion of immigrant labour throughout all branches and sectors of industry in which deskilled labour is concentrated, together with the establishment of suitable networks of control and surveillance.

To be sure, these are far from being the only causes of the current transition from enclosure to disenclosure: here too, changes refer us to modifications in class relations and to new popular struggles. But

the subordinate place they occupy in relation to the State's economic role already demonstrates their essential political content.

I said earlier that the political content of the various state functions is not bound up exclusively with the present hegemony of monopoly capital. We can now add that it does not depend only on state power, even if this power is extended to cover the whole of the capitalist class. For the political content of these functions is *inscribed in the institutional materiality and organizational framework of the state apparatus* – a reality which is confirmed even by the celebrated techno-social measures of the State. The institutional structures of health (social security, medical practice, hospitals, asylums), social welfare, town planning, community services and leisure are all stamped with the bourgeois 'seal'. Measures taken in these fields serve the capitalist reproduction of labour-power and the division of labour, even if they are partially due to popular struggles and even if they represent an acquisition. Hence, we are still faced with the problem: neither a challenge to monopoly hegemony nor even a more profound challenge to state power can by itself radically alter the policy of these apparatuses *as they are presently constituted*. This is true even when we are dealing with the so-called social mechanisms of general interest of the State, which are supposed to correspond *par excellence* to the socialization of the productive forces.

⁵ See the research-work of J. Bouvier, F. Morin, M. Beaud et al.

⁶ See especially F. Fox-Piven and R. Cloward, *Regulating the Poor*, 1971.

⁷ *Le psychanalysme*, p. 288.

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 287.

The Limits of the Moloch-State

The present role of the State ought not to obscure the fact that there are still *structural limits to the intervention of the capitalist State in the economy*. While these limits vary with the phase of capitalism, the character of class relations, and the form of the State (parliamentary democracy, fascism, etc.), they nevertheless appear, beyond a certain point, as strictly impassable in capitalism such as it exists and is reproduced in western societies. Here too, we must be wary of the customary image of an omnipotent State gradually and ineluctably moving towards what Henri Lefebvre has already termed ‘the state mode of production’.⁹ We must take care not to apply this image to relations between State and economy above all when, as is often the case (although certainly not in Lefebvre), it is coupled with a left-technocratic belief in the intrinsic capabilities of a rationalizing-managerial State to carry through the transition to socialism under the luminous guidance of left experts. The existence of such limits has been confirmed during the last four decades and again in recent years. This has spelt an end to the Keynesian illusions repeated by Shonfield and Galbraith to the effect that a rationalized, organized and planned capitalism has succeeded, by means of potentially unlimited state involvement in the economy, in suppressing or managing its own crises.

The limits to state intervention in the economy are consubstantial with the relative separation under capitalism of the political-state space and that of the economy – a separation which is currently

being reproduced in a new form. These limits are therefore linked above all with the very nature of the process of production, reproduction and accumulation of capital. The process is a contradictory one which partially obeys a logic of its own and which limits the State's activity in such a way that it is unable to really master the effects of its own actions in the economy. Today, nothing is clearer than the fact that such intervention itself becomes a factor directly productive of crises. For the moment, let us simply note that these functions present an initial limit beyond which they are absolutely incompressible: this is expressed in the rigidity of the State and in its restricted range of strategic choices. However, these economic functions are above all marked by a second limit, beyond which the State is incapable of passing. In a certain sense, the contemporary State is *caught in its own trap*. The metaphor is not too strong: from now on, the State can go neither backwards nor forwards, can neither stand outside nor control the heart of the economy. At one and the same time, it is driven to do both too much (crisis-inducing intervention) and too little (being unable to affect the deep causes of crises). The State is constantly oscillating between the two terms of the alternative: withdraw and/or get further involved. It is not an all-powerful State with which we are dealing, but rather a State with its back to the wall and its front poised before a ditch.

The limits which define the horizon of state action in the economy refer us back to the capitalist relations of production. Of course, the State works to reorganize the relations of production that structure the place of capital and thus to redistribute the powers flowing from the relations of possession and economic property among the various fractions of capital – most notably to the advantage of monopoly capital. Nevertheless, the State exists if and only if the hard core of capitalist relations of production is guaranteed, thereby ensuring exploitation of the working class and the popular masses (that is, their exclusion from real power over the means of production). State intervention with regard to the relations of production itself aims only at their reproduction as *capitalist* relations. We may express this by saying that the capitalist State is

constituted by a *negative general limit* to its intervention – that is to say, by *specific non-intervention* in the ‘hard core’ of capitalist relations of production.

This limit of principle creates a whole series of second-degree limits: the basic non-intervention fixes the structural limits of state supremacy in domains and fields whose contradictions are the result of the relations of production themselves – whether it be in the realm of circulation, distribution, consumption, or management of the monetary flow. To a great extent, but of course within a global strategy of hegemony, state activity is constituted as *ad-hoc* tinkering with conditions already laid down by the process of valorization of capital; that process itself is thus not susceptible to mastery by the State. Reproduction cannot be controlled without intervention in the hard core of the relations of production, since it is impossible to master the effects without reaching the causes. Measures taken by the State are thus essentially *a posteriori* interventions which tackle, as it were, the consequences and symptoms of the economic process, striving to regularize economic contradictions by means of reflex actions. *A priori* intervention, which is very often blind, can hardly go beyond certain elementary measures indispensable to the process of valorization of capital in general and to the realization of monopoly superprofits. Here then lie the limits to *capitalist planning*. Even when it takes the form of programming or establishment of broad production guidelines, it is not so much real planning as a projection into the future of the general tendencies prevailing at a given moment in time. In the majority of cases, it merely outlines the conditions of compatibility between the material bases of production (demography, use of natural and technical resources, etc.) and the accumulation of capital understood as the accumulation of financially defined wealth. At best, therefore, it assumes the role of an immense market-research undertaking: the various planning experts are themselves beginning to realize this and to lower their tone by comparison with the illusions of the fifties (which found an echo inside the Left itself).

Furthermore, this relationship of the State to the relations of production accounts for the fact that the *material resources* at its disposal are structurally limited. It is essentially profits on capital which establish the limits to state taxation of incomes: beyond a certain point, it is impossible to touch these profits without seriously threatening the reproduction process – that is, broadly speaking, the capitalist functioning of the economy. The financial resources of the State depend upon changes which conform to fluctuations in the rate of profit and which are very difficult to control. Thus, the State is largely unable to plan its revenue and to define in advance its margin of intervention: this is expressed in the permanent fiscal crisis that currently affects the capitalist states to a varying degree.

These limits to state intervention are therefore bound up with the direct impact of the class struggle: with the struggles against pro-capital state measures waged by the popular masses or specific classes thereof (the working class, the petty bourgeoisie, the rural popular classes); and with struggles at the heart of the bourgeoisie and the power bloc directed against measures that principally favour a given fraction of the bourgeoisie or a given component of the bloc. *These limits to state action are not purely external barriers:* insofar as such struggles constitute the State as the material condensation of a class relationship of forces, they represent limits that *stem from the very structure of the State* and from the formation of its policy on the basis of internal divisions expressive of class contradictions. Even where the capitalist State successfully represses and blocks frontal class struggles directed against itself, it does not thereby manage to lift the obstacles to its intervention. The ongoing class struggle traverses the State in a specific manner: nothing is clearer than the limits which marked the inter-war fascist States and which continue to characterize certain military dictatorships.

These structural limits therefore concern not only the struggle and resistance of the dominated classes, but also those of the fractions of the bourgeoisie. It is especially here that we should look for the limits of nationalization and public capital. In the framework of the capitalist State, nationalizations (as distinct from socializations) do not intrinsically deprive the bourgeoisie of economic ownership of

public capital. Even if it is so extensive that virtually the whole of capital is juridically nationalized, statization of the economy does not fundamentally break with capitalist relations of production (exclusion of the workers from real control over the means of production and from mastery of the labour processes). It gives rise instead to the phenomenon of state capitalism. Still, this step does meet structural obstacles in the context of a State already constituted on the basis of a private bourgeoisie. Contrary to the positions of Henri Lefebvre and many others, it is scarcely conceivable that such a transformation could take place in a progressive and irresistible fashion without considerable political fissures. For given the changes involved, especially the permutation of the bourgeois state personnel and the sweeping substitution of a state bourgeoisie for a private one, the latter would put up unyielding resistance to the process. However, this would only be true once a certain point had been reached, since a public capital sector (devalorization of sections of capital) is necessary for the maintenance of the rate of profit and for the reproduction of private capital. (In the capitalist countries today, well-defined seats of a state bourgeoisie – i.e. the management of public corporations – coexist in symbiosis with the private bourgeoisie.) For all these reasons, huge-scale state capitalism is generally to be found in countries marked by the absence of a native private bourgeoisie, in which a state bourgeoisie directly serves as a relay-team for the foreign, imperialist bourgeoisie (witness the decolonization process in numerous African countries); or else in countries that have undergone upheavals in a failed or aborted process of transition to socialism.

These limits to state action, which stem from its structure as the condensation of class relations, ultimately refer to its institutionalized apparatus materiality. This is the celebrated phenomenon of *bureaucratic ponderousness* or *administrative inertia* – the mode of dysfunctionality according to which the dominant classes or political personnel grasp certain aspects of the State intrinsic to its materiality.

The limits to state intervention are written into the structure of its apparatuses, networks and mechanisms. The selectivity of information and action derives from a process of *non-decision-making*, which applies not only to the hard core of the relations of production, but also to spheres that go far beyond it. The fundamental determinations of social development cannot be formulated as political issues, nor, at the outside, can they even be known and apprehended: to take just one example, we know that the very categories of the statistical apparatus (INSEE in France) rest on an implicit threshold of non-knowledge that is grafted on to the limits defining the non-decisions and non-interventions of the State. (I am, of course, leaving aside the question of straightforward governmental manipulation.) The same could be said of regulatory organization in the fiscal apparatus or the banking system (even where it is nationalized): non-apprehension of such well-known spheres as the Frenchmen's patrimony or company profits is not simply due to the State's maintenance of secret areas in which it decides not to set foot – as if it would be enough to unlock these secrets for things to become clear. No, such non-apprehension is rooted in material structures and apparatus practices. Thus, Raymond Barre is in part speaking the truth in stating that the French 'taxation system' is 'exceedingly delicate and complicated' and that it would have to be 'turned upside down' in order to implement a wealth tax.

However, through the reproduction of the social division of labour within the State, its structure as the condensation of class relations is concretized, together with its internal contradictions, in an intricate decision-making structure of relatively autonomous bureaucracies, each of which has its specific field of competence, its own clientele and perception of problems. In most cases, the resulting political elaboration excludes discourse on the basic social relations, and even on the precise class character of the various tactics of the administration. It takes the form of multi-level bargaining among administrative pressure groups and representatives of diverse interests – a process characterized by *ad hoc* bureaucratic *muddling through* in the mode of *negative*

coordination with the ‘status quo’. It is also manifested in the shape of an apparatus rigidity in relation to the bourgeoisie itself.

⁹ *De l’Etat* (op. cit.), Vol. 3: *Le mode de production étatique*, 1977.

Provisional Conclusions

The above analyses have political consequences for the more general problem of the transformation of the State in the transition to socialism. For the time being, I shall refer only to those which concern the state economic apparatus.

In the eventuality of the Left coming to power, what limits are there likely to be to state intervention in the economy?

These limits are not entirely dependent on the state power. Changes in the relationship of forces do not find automatic expression in any state apparatus – still less in its economic one, which possesses a materiality characterized to the highest degree by continuity of the State. Not only is radical transformation of the economic apparatus crucial to circumventing the mechanisms of bourgeois resistance within the State, but it is a necessary condition if the state economic intervention of a Left government is to retain a socialist character. Such transformation is important even if we assume that broad sections of the personnel of the economic apparatus will be effectively won to the left-wing experience. It is not by chance that, even then, the inertia which is particularly inscribed in the state economic apparatus (and which is also manifested with regard to the bourgeoisie) will weigh with much greater force upon a Left government. For the structure of that apparatus is such that it is not able, or is not supposed, to intervene in the economy beyond precisely those limits which a left-wing experience will have to transgress.

Going beyond the extent and nature of the socio-economic measures that the Left would have to take in the transition to socialism, the question of transforming the economic apparatus is posed even before the hard core of capitalist relations of production is seriously touched. Is it possible to move to real planning if the existing structures are left intact and if the only changes intended are at the level of political orientation and the composition of the state personnel? Is it possible in that case to prevent nationalizations from remaining mere statizations; to slow down the flight of capital; to control prices effectively and stifle inflation; to implement a tax on wealth and capital? Do the existing structures perhaps encompass resources which are simply blocked or left idle by bourgeois power and which need only to be brought into play? The same problem affects the State's role in relation to economic crisis: the present conjuncture clearly shows the difficulties encountered by the bourgeoisie itself in mastering the crisis through the State. Once in power, the Left will not only be faced with the problem of elaborating a policy that goes beyond mere management of the economic crisis of capitalism. For how can the state economic apparatus be transformed in such a way that a different policy becomes possible?

It is evident that the process must not place itself under the sign of statism – that is to say, it must not rest exclusively, or even essentially, on the State, but rather call, in economic space as well, upon the initiatives of the popular masses, the forms of direct, rank-and-file democracy, and the centres of self-management. However, it is equally evident that statism cannot be avoided without sweeping transformation of the State itself. Whether we like it or not, the State has a role of its own to play in establishing a left economic policy. Here we must beware of that left technocratism which, as we see today, can quite easily be combined with a certain self-management perspective that totally distorts the meaning of self-management itself. The essential features of this technocratism are well known: the present role of the State is supposed to derive from the increasing complexity inherent in the tasks it discharges in 'post-industrial, technological' societies; hence its economic

apparatus is susceptible to important changes in the framework of a transition to socialism. It still has to be managed by experts, only by left ones of course. According to this conception, the only possible way of avoiding statism is to bring the essentially unaltered state economic apparatus under the outside control of the popular masses and the structures of direct, rank-and-file democracy – in short, to flank it with self-management *counter-powers* and to bring the techno-bureaucrats under mass supervision. The masses propose, the State decides. How many left experts today swear one hundred per cent by self-management only because they know what would become of the self-management project about which they care nothing?

There can be no doubt that especially in the economic sphere (where there is moreover a danger of corporatism), direct democracy presents genuine difficulties; in any case, we must not give in to facile demagoguery. Still, the issue of direct democracy will be at the centre of the stage if we are to avoid bureaucratic statism, that is to say, bureaucratic state capitalism. But above all in the case of the state economic apparatus, avoidance of statism and genuine stimulation of direct, rank-and-file democracy also involves transformation of the existing apparatus – a global transformation extending to state branches and networks which are *par excellence* ‘social’ or which pertain to the ‘general interest’. For how is it possible even to conduct a policy of social justice with apparatuses like the present social security or welfare service, merely joined to various citizens’ or users’ committees?

However, there is another side to the coin: namely, the very specificity of the state economic apparatus. Here special problems will stand in the way of change, which cannot follow the same rhythm or assume the same forms as in other apparatuses.

1. In reality, the economic apparatus is not split between a technical apparatus and a monopoly super-apparatus, although some of its branches and mechanisms do crystallize monopoly interests in particular. It remains, in its unity, an essential factor for the reproduction of capital. While it follows that changes must affect this apparatus as a whole, something else also follows. Precisely to

the extent that the economic apparatus discharges functions crucial to the reproduction of capitalist relations of production and capitalist accumulation *as a whole* – functions that are incompressible so long as the relations of production are not themselves radically undermined – the changes undergone by this apparatus cannot but *closely follow* the rhythm of change in the relations of production. Now, the democratic road to socialism refers to a *long process*, the first phase of which involves a challenge to the hegemony of monopoly capital, but not headlong subversion of the core of the relations of production. A challenge to monopoly hegemony already presupposes significant modification of the economic apparatus as a whole. But during this phase, change cannot go beyond certain limits without running the risk of economic collapse. Over and above the breaks involved in the anti-monopoly phase, the State will still have to ensure the working of the economy – an economy which will remain to a certain degree capitalist for a long time to come.

We must know how to make a choice and then draw clearly the consequences of the strategy adopted. It is flight from this ‘stubborn’ fact that has given rise to the ambiguity of some current analyses made by the Left. For they suggest that the anti-monopoly phase consists in ‘smashing’ the monopoly super-State in which the political character of the State is concentrated, whereas the (supposedly neutral) technical State must remain as it is throughout the transition to socialism. In other words, these analyses run with the hare and hunt with the hounds. However, there can be no question of radically destroying part of the economic apparatus in the anti-monopoly phase, while the other part of the apparatus leads a life everlasting. For in the framework of a global transformation that is itself indispensable for the transition to socialism, certain structures of the entire economic apparatus will indeed have to remain during this phase; in short, it is a question of transforming *by stages* the state economic apparatus *as a whole*. To be sure, this transformation will assume differential forms and uneven rhythms according to the branch, network and circuit of the economic apparatus: first, according to the fraction of capital whose interests,

especially interests, it crystallizes – the bastions of monopoly capital will have to be dismantled first of all (a point that my criticism of the conception of a monopoly super-State was not intended to deny); secondly, according to its degree of adaptation to the needs of the popular masses – of course, while the social security system would also have to be transformed, the process would not be the same as in the case of the Ministry of the Interior; and lastly, according to the role of the given branch or network vis-à-vis the economic process, and to its exact political character – just as evidently, while the INSEE has a political content, it also has a comparatively ‘technical’ role such that it could not be transformed in the same way as, for example, DATAR.

2. Finally, the democratic road to socialism guarantees certain liberties: the other side of the coin is that the bourgeoisie thereby enjoys greater possibilities of economic sabotage of the experience of the Left in power. Although transformation of the state economic apparatus seems necessary in order to prevent and counter such sabotage, it should be apparent that one is walking on a tight-rope. At no point should changes lead to actual dismantling of the economic apparatus: such a development would paralyse it and accordingly increase the chances of boycott on the part of the bourgeoisie. In the present context of changes in the state economic apparatus, we again meet the former dilemma: not to do enough (Chile) or to do too much. The latter was true in Portugal between 1974 and 1975, when whole branches of the economic apparatus such as the Ministries of Agriculture and Industry (which were entirely controlled by the Left and won to a radical socialist experiment) were thrown into complete paralysis – a phenomenon that was due not to bourgeois resistance but to the forms and rhythms of ‘smashing’ adopted for their transformation. This paralysis and dismantling made it impossible for the experiences of agricultural communes and factory self-management to find the slightest support or aid in apparatuses that were overwhelmingly on their side. In these circumstances, the boycott launched by the bourgeoisie could be exercised to the full.

Part Four

The Decline of Democracy: Authoritarian Statism

I. Authoritarian Statism and Totalitarianism

I

Some of our latter-day power theorists have just discovered the existence of Gulag. We can only congratulate them on this; they may have taken their time, but it is never too late to do the right thing. However, judging by the current function of this term, we may suppose that had Gulag not already existed, it would have been necessary to invent it. Otherwise, how could one dare, when talking of our present western societies, even to utter all the nonsense about advanced liberal democracy and ‘permissive societies’ – societies, by the way, whose virtues have simultaneously and very conveniently been discovered by our ‘new philosophers’?

Comparison does not provide a reason. The totalitarian aspects of power in the East are quite real and should not be assimilated (in the scientific rather than the normative sense) to the functioning of our own societies. But nor should they, as often happens today, make us forget western totalitarian systems (Pinochet or Videla) or even the more prosaic situation of States with a democratic regime. In western capitalist societies, the State is undergoing considerable modification. A new form of State is currently being imposed – we

would have to be blind not to notice (and passion always blinds, even if it springs from the noblest motives). For want of a better term, I shall refer to this state form as *authoritarian statism*. This will perhaps indicate the general direction of change: namely, intensified state control over every sphere of socio-economic life *combined with* radical decline of the institutions of political democracy and with draconian and multiform curtailment of so-called ‘formal’ liberties, whose reality is being discovered now that they are going overboard. Although some of these changes have been operating for a long time, the present-day State marks a veritable turn in relation to previous state forms.

I shall deal here only with the dominant (or, in more dignified language, the developed) capitalist countries, above all Europe and the United States. Of course, these changes affect every capitalist country insofar as they have their origin in the current phase of international reproduction of capitalism. But given the deepening division between dominant and dominated countries of the imperialist chain – a result of the internationalization of capitalist relations – we cannot engage in general theorization about the contemporary State covering transformations in these countries as a whole. Thus, in the zone of dominated countries, for example in Latin America, we are witnessing the emergence of *a new form of dependent State* which, itself manifested in diverse regimes, involves significant points of dissimilarity with the new form of State in the dominant countries.

More fundamentally, therefore, authoritarian statism is bound up with the periodization of capitalism into distinct stages and phases. It seems to correspond to the current phase of imperialism and monopoly capitalism in the dominant countries, in the way that the liberal State referred to the competitive stage of capitalism and the various forms of interventionist State to the previous phases of monopoly capitalism. Authoritarian statism is thus dependent upon those structural modifications in the relations of production and the processes and social division of labour which characterize the present phase at both the world and national levels. While the economic role of the State, which is inseparable from its political

content, has to constitute the guiding thread of an analysis of authoritarian statism, it is very far from providing a sufficient explanation: for we are talking now of an institutional reality that can only be examined in its own right. Authoritarian statism hinges upon those transformations in social classes, political struggles and the relationship of forces which mark the present phase at both the world and national levels.

It is certainly important that authoritarian statism exists in the form of regimes that vary according to the original conjuncture of the country concerned. But by stressing its relationship to the current phase of capitalism, we have already indicated that it is hardly a mere surface 'phenomenon'. A particular form of representative political democracy already seems to have been overtaken in the capitalism that exhibits and reproduces itself today. Unless real changes are made to the factors which have induced this new form of State, it scarcely seems possible to realize the Left's aim of challenging authoritarian statism through not only defence, but also development and extension of democratic liberties.

Authoritarian statism also refers us to the *political crisis* and the *crisis of the State*. This is now beginning to appear self-evident, but such was not the case in the still recent past. I have in mind firstly the majority of representatives of official political science – from traditional functionalism to the various 'systematisms', both in France and elsewhere. For all these schools, political crisis and crisis of the State were and remain strictly unthinkable: they constitute a mysterious dysfunctional moment, sharply breaking with the natural equilibrium of a 'political system' that is supposed to function harmoniously through self-regulation. How we have had to put up with such celebrations of the pluralism of power in liberal society! Indeed, since it has supposedly overcome its contradictions, including even the class struggle, this very liberal society is thought to give the lie to a now (already!) outdated Marxism. However, I am thinking above all of a second current, which is quite distinct from the first and considerably more interesting. The thinkers of contestation, from the Frankfurt School to American radicals, used to paint the terrifying image of a totalitarian, all-powerful Moloch-

State based on manipulatory capitalism – a State which had apparently succeeded in ‘integrating’ the popular masses (alas, contrary to the predictions of Marx and others) and which was irresistibly advancing to swallow up its subjects.

If this image is false, it is not only because of the structural limits that mark all capitalist States: authoritarian statism is articulated to the political crisis and the crisis of the State. It is also a response to the elements of crisis, including those of its own crisis. Thus, such statism does not designate univocal strengthening of the State but constitutes the effect of a tendency to strengthening-weakening of the State, the poles of which develop in an uneven manner. The authoritarian statism of the contemporary State is terrifyingly real. But in spite of this (or rather because of it) the State remains a clay-footed colossus, fleeing ahead on treacherous ground; it should indeed be remembered that wild animals are most dangerous when they are wounded.

Now, although this process is most apparent on the political plane, it is no easy matter to define the relationship between the State and political crisis. Some of us have recently hazarded the task in a collective work *La crise de l'Etat*,¹ and so I shall only indicate the character of the problem. Even though the present economic crisis is not a passing phenomenon but, in many respects, a structural crisis, it would be wrong to consider it as a ‘general crisis’ extending to the present phase of capitalism as a whole; or to imagine that the crisis which affects virtually all the capitalist countries that interest us here must everywhere be expressed in the form of a real political crisis or *a fortiori* a crisis of the State. Political crisis is never reducible to economic crisis, nor a crisis of the State to political crisis. Indeed, the capitalist State is made in such a way that political crises can be reabsorbed without issuing in veritable crises of the State. We cannot therefore in general terms describe the present-day State, which corresponds to a certain phase of capitalism, as a crisis-State or a State in crisis. That would be to dilute the specificity of the concept of crisis after the manner of the Third International: it would be to imagine that the ‘decay’ of capitalism automatically keeps pace with its reproduction and that

it is currently living out the last phase of an inescapable death-agony. According to this conception, a phase of reproduction of capitalism (which, as if by chance, is always the one in which we now find ourselves) merely expresses a permanent and, in one way or another, ever-present crisis. It suggests that the present-day State is a State in crisis, by virtue of being the last possible state form before the necessary advent of socialism. Quite clearly, however, we should assign to the concepts of political crisis and state crisis the field of a particular conjuncture in which contradictions are condensed – one which finds expression in the peculiar features of the existing state institutions.

Of course, since political crisis never comes as a bolt from the blue, we must refer first of all to the *generic elements* of political crisis and state crisis. Unlike a full-blown crisis, these elements are constantly present in the reproduction of capitalist political forms. *The whole of the current phase is permanently and structurally characterized by a peculiar sharpening of the generic elements of political crisis and state crisis* – a sharpening which is itself articulated to the economic crisis of capitalism. Authoritarian statism appears also as the result of, and as a response to, the sharpening of these elements of crisis. But in certain European countries, we are witnessing a real political crisis which finds expression, moreover, in a crisis of the State. Hence, *in these countries* authoritarian statism is marked by a state crisis: to a varying degree, this is the case in Spain, Portugal and Greece, as well as in Italy and France.

This state crisis also offers the Left new objective possibilities of a democratic transition to socialism. There are several kinds of political crisis: the present one defines for the Left a precise field related to the possibility of a democratic transition. What is involved is neither a dual-power crisis nor a crisis stemming from a tendency towards fascism.

II

Can we identify this authoritarian statism with a species of totalitarianism, or even with a new type of fascism? We should mention in passing that, until quite recently, this was indeed the position of a number of our 'new philosophers', then still in their 'Maoist' period.² As the reader will remember, they used to deafen us with talk of the 'new fascism' and of the need for a 'new resistance', comparing the rulers of 1972 France with the Nazi occupiers who left behind such sinister memories. But that was before some of them rallied to the virtues of advanced liberal democracy. I gave my opinion in *Fascism and Dictatorship*:³ just as I do not today consider Giscard to be the enlightened romantic of a new liberalism, I did not then see in him the traits of some apprentice Goebbels acting under the orders of a budding Hitler-Pompidou.

No doubt the roots of the peculiarly modern phenomenon of totalitarianism extend to the very heart of the capitalist relations of production and social division of labour: this is apparent in the power techniques of the modern State (the individualization process, Law itself) and in the spatial and temporal matrices implied by these relations and inscribed in the nation and the structure of the State. However, these roots are not buds that gradually blossom, making their way through the ruses of history towards their final fulfilment: universal totalitarianism.

At this point I shall go into a digression on the countries of the East. In my opinion, some of the totalitarian features of power in the East basically derive from the 'capitalist aspects' of the State and of the relations of production and social division of labour that underlie it. (There are, of course, other factors involved, since capitalism is not the source of all evil.) Now, here too, it is not a simple question of the blossoming of totalitarian buds. The totalitarian features marking these countries depend on a series of clearly-defined historical (economic, political and other) factors: this is, in fact, a quite distinct state form, and it constitutes the rule, not the exception. These states are far from being a mere variant of totalitarian statism as we know it in the West; however, they do bear a family resemblance to it. Some of the analyses made below,

particularly those of the role of the state bureaucracy, will also concern the countries of the East. But we need to keep in mind their peculiarities: for the similarity is not due to some uniform tendency of 'techno-bureaucratization' in the contemporary 'technological-industrial' world. The state features lodged in the relations of production and social division of labour are invested in class relations and political relations that differ considerably from those of the capitalist countries.

Let us now return to the problem as it is posed today in our western societies. Even if totalitarianism depends on a number of factors for which there is as yet no exhaustive explanation (and which Marxism alone cannot explain), that is no reason for sinking into a threadbare irrationalism propelled by terrorist notions. Authoritarian statism does not constitute the fulfilment of the totalitarian buds inherent in every capitalist State. Whether it is a question of fascism, military dictatorship or Bonapartism, totalitarianism assumes a specific form in the dominant western countries that interest us here, constituting a peculiar political phenomenon which I have with reason designated as the exceptional form of State. It corresponds to a precise conjuncture in the highly complex development of class relations, and to specific institutional features of the State which break with the regular forms of the reproduction of bourgeois political domination – that is, broadly speaking, with those of the 'democratic republic'. Fascism in particular, both in its established form and as the process of its growth, is bound up with a *quite distinct political crisis*. It cannot characterize the State of an entire *phase* of capitalism such as exists and is reproduced in our societies – even if the exceptional State *qua* capitalist has certain features in common with the democratic form of State prevalent in the phase of fascist growth. In the historical epoch of fascism, the Rooseveltian State or the French Republic did present certain characteristics of the interventionist State (e.g., a heightened economic role or strengthening of the executive) which also marked German and Italian fascism. But this did not entail that the exceptional State (fascism) had become the necessary form for that particular phase. Contrary to the positions

long held by the Third International, the changes peculiar to the States of that time were very far from involving them all in a move towards fascism.

Thus, the emergence of authoritarian statism cannot be identified either with a new fascist order or with a tendency towards fascism. The present-day State is neither the new form of a genuine exceptional State nor, in itself, a transitional form on the road to such a State: *it rather represents the new 'democratic' form of the bourgeois republic in the current phase of capitalism*. If I may dare say so, it is both better (in maintaining a certain democratic reality) and worse (in that it is not merely the fruit of a conjuncture which need only be reversed for shrunken liberties to be restored). The fascist State corresponded to a political crisis and even to a real crisis of the State (without, however, being a State-in-crisis): such is not the case with numerous countries in which authoritarian statism is currently asserting itself. Lastly, even in countries where this state form is combined with a crisis of the State, there is no question at the moment of a process or crisis tending towards fascism. A fascist State is never established in cold blood: precisely insofar as it constitutes an exceptional State, it involves a real *break* in the State. Moreover, it presupposes an historical defeat of the working-class and popular movement: it is this defeat that opens the way to fascism, which is never a direct and immediate reaction to a rise of the popular movement. In no case today where there is a genuine crisis of the State has such a defeat been registered; quite the contrary.

I am by no means arguing that the possibility of an exceptional State is henceforth excluded in Europe – whether in the shape of fascism or in that of military dictatorship or a strong-arm neo-Bonapartism. Given the present political situation, especially in France, that is a more or less long-term eventuality with which we must certainly reckon. This leads me on to the second aspect of the question – an aspect which concerns not merely the limits to representative democracy and basic liberties involved in the ‘democratic’ regularity of the contemporary State, but those very elements tending towards fascism that are present in every capitalist

State. In opposition to those who celebrate a supposedly essential difference between the various democratic forms (the 'liberal State') and the totalitarian systems, we have to point out this time that certain features are common to both precisely because of their shared capitalist aspect. Leaving aside the fact that the two state forms may exist in a single phase of capitalism (strengthening of the executive under Roosevelt's New Deal and the fascist States of the thirties), their common features are bound up with the roots of totalitarianism. Every democratic form of capitalist State itself carries totalitarian tendencies.

The present-day State exhibits a certain peculiarity which we should now note. In a phase when the generic elements of crisis undergo structural intensification, even corresponding in some countries to a real political or state crisis, fascistic elements or tendencies appear in the democratic form of State to a much more marked degree than previously. Authoritarian statism also involves the establishment of an entire institutional structure serving to prevent a rise in popular struggles and the dangers which that holds for class hegemony. This veritable arsenal, which is not simply of a legal-constitutional character, does not always come to the fore in the exercise of power: it is revealed to the mass of the population (that is, to all except certain 'anti-social' elements) above all through sudden jolts to its functioning. Hidden under a bushel, this arsenal is still in the republic's reserve-stock, ready to be unleashed in a fascist-type enterprise. Probably for the first time in the history of democratic States, the present form not only contains scattered elements of totalitarianism, but crystallizes their organic disposition in a permanent structure running parallel to the official State. Indeed, this duplication of the State seems to be a structural feature of authoritarian statism, involving not a watertight dissociation between the official State and the structure in question, but their functional overlapping and constant symbiosis. As a result, any fascist-type process that may be unleashed will undoubtedly not take the form that it did in the past. This is not to say that it could proceed gradually and imperceptibly in cold blood, for now as before the changeover has to involve a break. Unlike the previous

experiences of fascism, however, such a process would involve not so much outside infiltration or investment of the state apparatus as a break within the State following lines that have already been traced in its present configuration.

III

Authoritarian statism therefore points, via changes at the level of the relations of production and the processes and social division of labour, to a considerable shift in class relations. We shall have to keep this in mind when analysing institutional modifications of the State.

First of all, let us consider how this relates to the popular masses and the working class. Corresponding to the long period of 'growth' and to changes in the labour process itself, the clear deepening of the social division of labour, both at a world level between Europe and the United States and within each European country, has accentuated inequalities and disparities between the working class and the dominant classes. Intensified exploitation, achieved through a rise in relative surplus-value, has rested on more complex and disguised forms such as speed-up, higher labour productivity, and degradation of living conditions. The general rise of European workers' struggles, coming before the economic crisis made itself felt on a massive scale, marked a clear end to the long period of calm that lasted more or less through the Cold War. In their turn, economic crisis, inflation and above all unemployment (the spectacular increase of which seems to be a structural feature of the current phase) have helped to decompose a relative consensus based on growth and social well-being. Even immigrant workers have begun to take an active part in the struggles of their 'host' countries. All these developments have stimulated a rise and politicization of struggle expressed in the new demands and forms of struggle of the European workers' movement.

Now, this general process does not stop with the working class: the phase of capital accumulation known as accelerated

industrialization has led to massive inequality affecting certain broad categories of the population: old people, the youth, women. In the ranks of the peasantry and traditional petty bourgeoisie (craftsmen, small traders), those 'left out' or treated as rejects are now too numerous to be counted. Still more significant is what is happening to the considerably expanded new petty bourgeoisie of technicians, office workers, skilled personnel and civil servants. The overwhelming majority are suffering rapid deterioration of their living conditions, their possibilities of upward social mobility, their income levels, security of employment and traditional career privileges, as well as of their work situation itself, which is marked by the deepening social division of labour at the heart of intellectual labour. The alliance between the bourgeoisie and the traditional and new petty bourgeoisie – a classical alliance in the countries of Europe – is currently being called into question; and as a result, the objective field of popular alliances is undergoing considerable expansion. In addition, conflicts more closely bound up with the ideological crisis appear as both the origin and the effect of a new popular awareness concerning questions that are now no longer 'secondary' fronts – witness, in this regard, the student movement, the women's liberation movement and the ecological movement.

In a parallel process, the sharpening of contradictions within the dominant classes has also become a permanent, structural feature of the current phase. This is true of contradictions between monopoly and non-monopoly capital stemming from the present forms and rhythms of the concentration of capital and from the transformations which these induce in the relations of production; and it is also true of the contradictions that have grown within monopoly capital itself. All these contradictions are becoming intensified in the context of economic crisis and can only be fully grasped if we take into account the present conditions of the internationalization of capital. In various European countries, reproduction induced by foreign (and above all American) capital, together with the complex internalization of such capital within native capital, has an important dislocating effect upon the latter. A new division is appearing between, on the one hand, what I have

called the *domestic bourgeoisie* (which, while being linked to foreign capital and thus not constituting a truly national bourgeoisie, nevertheless enters into significant contradictions with it) and, on the other hand, a bourgeoisie entirely dependent upon foreign capital. I am speaking now of a tendency of division, which does not always coincide with the split between monopoly and non-monopoly capital, often traversing both from one end to the other. Inter-imperialist contradictions, which have been reactivated following a period of relative peace under undisputed U.S. hegemony, find a direct echo within the power blocs of the various countries. Taken as a whole, these factors define a structural characteristic of the present phase: namely, *the hidden but permanent instability of the bourgeoisie's hegemony in the dominant countries*.

These phenomena are by now quite widely known, and it will be more interesting to survey briefly certain original characteristics of this phase which relate to the specific role of the State. In fact, the State's economic role only assumes the present authoritarian forms because of a paradoxical circumstance. Incompressible beyond certain limits, that role no longer acts as a stabilizing force; on the contrary, it is itself an important factor of destabilization. The paradox lies in the fact that authoritarian statism is not simply the means with which the State equips itself to tackle the crisis, but the response to a crisis which it itself helps to produce. This role of the State proves to be at once the accelerator of the generic elements of political crisis and the generating force of that crisis itself. The counter-tendencies to the falling rate of profit, which are brought into play by the State in order to avoid crises, become factors of a crisis that, for this very reason, goes beyond a straightforward economic crisis.

1. The characteristic sharpening of contradictions within the power bloc necessitates growing political involvement on the part of the State, so that the bloc may be unified and class hegemony reproduced. Now, a particular role is played by the current economic activity of the State (devalorization of sections of capital, restructuring of industry in order to increase relative surplus-value, an increased role in furthering the concentration of capital, selective

aid to individual capitals, the decisive weight of the national State in the internationalization of capital). More than ever, these phenomena massively favour the strictly 'economic-corporative' interests of certain fractions or of individual capitals. Thus, the snowballing involvement of the State in economic contradictions merely broadens the cracks in the power bloc. It lends them a political character and becomes a direct factor of political crisis, constantly calling into question the State's organization of hegemony and of the general interest of the bourgeoisie.

2. The State intervenes in a number of once-marginal spheres, which are becoming integrated in, and at the same time expanding, the space of the reproduction and accumulation of capital (town-planning, transport, health, the environment, communal services, etc.). This results in considerable politicization of popular struggles related to these spheres : the popular masses are from now on directly confronted with the State. Already an important generic element of political crisis, this process is becoming more pronounced by virtue of the fact that, in a period of economic crisis, such state intervention sheds its alluring aspect of 'social policy'. Its connection with the interests of capital is revealed and the State incurs a sizeable loss of legitimacy in the eyes of the popular masses. Intervention thereby scales down the generic elements of crisis, as is most apparent today in the case of unemployment relief or adult education. Authoritarian statism is also the reality which emerges from the ruins of the Welfare State myth.

3. The State's role in favour of foreign or transnational capital heightens the uneven development of capitalism within each country in which foreign capital is reproduced. It does this most notably by designating particular regions as 'development areas' to the detriment of certain others – a process which, articulated to the multiple forms of ideological crisis, produces fissures in the national unity underpinning the bourgeois State. Such a development characterizes regionalist movements or movements linked to the awakening of various nationalities, both of which have a directly political character and constitute important elements of crisis, however ambiguous they may often be. The present phase is not at

all marked by emergence of a super-State above nations or by loss of importance of the national State. The authoritarian State is not the local appendage of an American or Common Market super-State, or of a transnational super-state-apparatus such as the CIA or NATO; it rather corresponds to a real break in its respective national unity, to that awakening of ethnic and national minorities which runs parallel to the rise of popular struggles.

4. In addition, we should consider the present role of the State in relation to the economic crisis strictly so called. The new problem is as follows: to the extent that the State massively intervenes in the reproduction of capital, and to the extent that economic crises are, from a certain point of view, necessary, organic factors of such reproduction, the State has probably succeeded in curbing the kind of extreme economic crisis that manifested itself in 1930, for example. But it has done so by assuming functions which tempestuous crises used to fulfil in a concentrated period of time. Without making too much of the paradox, it is exactly as if we were dealing less with a State unable to master the effects of economic crisis than with a State whose self-appointed task is to foster rampant economic crises, the effects of which are outside its control. An evident example is the direct state orchestration of current unemployment and inflation – even though we should see in this not merely, or indeed principally, a conscious strategy of the bourgeoisie, but an objective result of the State's own role. In this respect, the contemporary State is clearly distinct from previous States, which seemed content to stifle, with varying degrees of success, the social ill-effects of tempestuous economic crises. The present course involves considerable politicization of the struggle of the popular masses (in the sense that it is waged against the policy of the State).

This phase is therefore characterized both by structural modifications of class relations and by sharpening of the generic elements of political crisis – processes which affect unevenly the dominant capitalist countries as a whole. In certain European countries (France, Italy, Spain, Greece, Portugal) contradictions condense into veritable political crises finding expression in a crisis

of the State itself. Authoritarian statism just as much results from transcription of these changes in the state structure as it does from attempts by the State to adapt to these changes, to protect itself from the generic elements of crisis, and to find a response to the political and state crisis.

IV

I shall not here be able to undertake an exhaustive analysis of the present-day State and of transformations in the realm of political democracy. That would require a work specifically dealing with the question.

Above all, I shall examine one key problem which is just as widely recognized and which can never be stressed too much: namely, the problem of the relations between *political democracy* and *socio-economic democracy* in the broad sense of the term. Now, over and above the limitation and transformation of the institutions of political democracy, what characterizes contemporary societies is the growing distance between political democracy and socio-economic democracy. The development of capitalism, especially in its current phase, is so far from smoothing away inequalities that it actually reproduces them in a new form and at a higher degree of intensity. In the factories, offices and shopping complexes, the new forms of the social division and organization of labour have undergone constant strengthening and extension – notwithstanding all the verbiage about techno-structures, discipline and despotism, quasi-military rules of organization, hierarchy, and the centralization of decision-making and sanctions. Furthermore, capitalist development has continually broadened the zones and sectors of the ‘new poor’, defined, of course, not according to the socio-economic and cultural criteria of previous epochs, or to those of absolute pauperization, but according to present-day social realities. Already studied by Michael Harrington in the United States and Peter Townsend in Great Britain, such new poverty is estimated

in France to affect 'half the people aged over 65 (2,600,000), a half of semi-skilled workers⁴ (1,300,000), the majority of unskilled workers (1,100,000), two-thirds of service workers (800,000), a quarter of traders and craftsmen (800,000), and the majority of agricultural wage-earners (600,000)'.⁵ This is to say nothing of those whose living conditions make of them real 'outsiders': namely, immigrant workers, the unemployed, women and a large proportion of the young and the old. In short, we are talking of large sections of the population whose real economic, social and cultural conditions of life not only diverge more and more from legal-political representations of equality, but make increasingly fragile their participation in the institutions of political democracy.

We know too the contours of the problem outlined by the relations between wealth, money and the functioning of the institutions of the republic. One example among a thousand is that of the financial resources at the disposal of the majority parties.

I shall deal directly not with these questions but with the specific changes that affect political democracy at the level of the state mechanisms of authoritarian statism. I shall essentially dwell on a single case: that of changes in the relation between the state-bureaucracy-administration and the functioning of the political party system. Of course, as several writers have emphasized,⁶ the current decline of democracy and the curtailment of democratic liberties affect a wider and wider area, taking many different forms and marking the structures of power more or less in their entirety. However, it is not by chance that I have chosen this particular example: the whole of history shows that the forms and functioning of representative democracy, considered *as a system of genuine party pluralism distinct from the state bureaucracy-administration*, are strictly correlated at the level of state institutions with the functioning of *political liberties*. The operation of this system *conditions* the operation of liberties in every field of political democracy. The democratic road to socialism, and democratic socialism itself, rules out not only a single-party system, but also confusion of parties with the state administration. We must understand this proposition *in the strong sense*: not as one element among others of the democratic

road, but as its absolutely necessary, although not of course sufficient, condition. Unless this condition is fulfilled, no direct, rank-and-file democracy can ever prevent totalitarianism, nor can any brake be applied to the advance of statism.

¹ *La crise de l'Etat*, ed. Nicos Poulantzas, Paris 1976. See also the collective works published in West Germany: *Sozialstruktur und politische Systeme*, ed. Urs Jaeggi, 1976, and *Politische System-Krisen*, ed. M. Janicke, 1973.

² *Les Temps Modernes*, February 1972, 'Nouveau fascisme, nouvelle démocratie'. See also *Kursbuch* no. 31, May 1973.

³ *Fascism and Dictatorship*, NLB 1974.

⁴ *Ouvriers spécialisés* of grades O₁, O₂, and O₃ on the scale of collective bargaining.

⁵ Figures compiled by L. Stoleru, quoted in M. Maschino, *Sauve qui peut: démocratie à la française*, Paris 1977.

⁶ There is a large literature on this subject too, relating to the restriction of freedoms in all areas of public life. Among recent French works are those by R. Errera, M. Duverger, J.-P. Cot, Claude Julien, J.-D. Bredin, P. Juquin, G. Burdeay, J.-P. Chevenement, L. Hamon, M. Maschino, Pierre Viansson-Ponte, and the Syndicat de la Magistrature.

The Irresistible Rise of the State Administration

The decline of parliament, the strengthening of the Executive, the political role currently assumed by the state administration – these now constitute the *leitmotiv* of political studies. But while they are the most evident features of change in the State, they are also the most difficult to grasp in their real dimensions.

Now, these changes have marked the State since the end of competitive capitalism and the beginnings of monopoly capitalism. Of course, just as the State's economic role under the latter should not make us think that the liberal State of competitive capitalism did not intervene in the economy, so the strengthening of the Executive does not imply that the liberal State rested on an all-powerful parliament and the virtual absence of an Executive. Varying from country to country, the state-bureaucracy-administration has always occupied an important place in the organization and functioning of the bourgeois State. The fact remains, however, that the strengthening of executive power has been under way since the emergence of monopoly capitalism, thereby marking the passage from the liberal to the interventionist State. Moreover, the phenomenon has now assumed quite novel forms, which to an uneven degree affect the developed capitalist countries as a whole.

It is thus quite wrong to argue that the process is peculiar to France – as is done by a well-established current of French political thought. In his recent book *Le mal français*, Alain Peyrefitte repeats

this traditional theme; and it has long been a favourite with Michel Crozier, who attempted the *tour de force* of explaining May '68 in terms of the specificity of France – and at the same time cheerfully discovered the virtues of the United States, Great Britain and West Germany ...⁷ In fact, one only has to consult writers from these countries to observe that they are equally obsessed with the phenomenon as it affects their own national realities. It goes without saying that France exhibits certain (rather well-known) particularities. But France itself is undergoing major changes that cannot be simply dismissed by reference to a stability of tradition, however much support may be enlisted from the historians. As we know, the Gaullists bear a large measure of responsibility for these changes.

I repeat, *a measure* of responsibility, precisely because the phenomenon is much more general: the decline of parliament and the strengthening of the Executive are intimately related to the growing economic role of the State. But it is a *large* measure, since the authoritarian statism induced by that economic role is always inserted in a clearly-defined political situation.

Let us take the case of law, such as it is concretized in the structure of legislative power and in the relative distinction between the latter and the power of the Executive. The example is a characteristic one, seeing that it is given pride of place by those who speak of the 'technical nature' of current changes. The preponderance of parliament as the sanctuary of law and legislative power was based on enactment of general norms, whose universal and formal character constitutes the essential feature of modern law. Incarnating the general will and universality of the people – nation in opposition to royal arbitrariness, parliament corresponded to the institutionalization of law as the embodiment of universal Reason. As the *de jure* State exercising control over the government and administration, it seemed consubstantial with the idea of a faultless general system of norms legitimated by public opinion.

In a manner that has now become quite spectacular, state economic intervention challenges this aspect of the juridical system in increasingly significant areas. It can no longer be confined to the

mould of general, formal and universal norms that is essentially adapted to state involvement in maintaining and reproducing the 'general conditions' of production. The economic role of the State is modelled on specific acts of regulation, corresponding to clearly-defined conjunctures, situations and interests. The multiplicity of socio-economic problems tackled by the State also requires more and more elaborate concretization of these general norms.

Thus, the relative distinction between legislative and executive power is becoming less sharp: through a process correlative with changes in the nature of such regulation, the power to fix norms and enact rules is shifting towards the Executive and the state administration. That legitimacy embodied by parliament which had as its frame of reference a universal rationality is gradually passing over into a legitimacy characterized by the instrumental rationality of efficiency and embodied by the Executive-administration. Indeed, the general and universal laws still enacted by parliament – which are, at bottom, merely framework-laws – are applied only after the Executive has passed them through a process of concretization and particularization. This is the stage of decrees, judicial interpretation and civil service adjustment, without which the norms enacted by parliament do not enter into the practice of the law. It is by now quite widely known that this allows parliamentary decisions to be not only obstructed but actually distorted. What is more, the initiative in proposing laws has almost entirely shifted from parliament to the Executive, new bills being directly elaborated by the civil service. Such laws are no longer inscribed in the formal logic of the juridical system – a logic based on norm-universality and on the rationality of the General Will represented by the Enactor – but are entered in the quite different account-book of concrete, day-to-day economic policy embodied by the administrative apparatus.

In any case, the decline of parliament and the preponderant role of the Executive-administration corresponds to the decline of law. Its monopoly position in the normative system is eroded by changes affecting the nature and the form of social regulation.

Now, the retreat of law is not due to state economic intervention as such. It is articulated by several mechanisms to those hegemonic interests in favour of which the generality and universality of law is giving way to particularist regulation. I am referring here not only to the concentration and centralization of capital, but to the present-day hegemony of monopoly capital, and even to the hidden instability which characterizes that hegemony in the context of structural economic crisis. Unless the relationship of forces exhibits a certain degree of stability on its central arena, it cannot be juridically regulated through a system of universal and general norms of a kind that would establish its own structure of change and thereby make strategic anticipation possible for the protagonists. However, the growing contradictions within the power bloc actually determine the *instability* of monopoly hegemony.

Moreover, the newly-emerging forms of politicization of popular struggle, together with the ideological crisis affecting the various apparatuses-institutions (the educational system, prisons, the judicial system, the army and police, etc.), lead to new forms of political domination and new procedures of exercising power that are bound up with changes in the management-reproduction of labour-power. The traditional form of social control, which is organized by general and universal norms defining guilt and distinguishing loyal subjects from those outside the law, is now combined with individualized regulation that starts out from the 'mentality' (the presumed intention) of each member of society considered as a potentially guilty suspect. The general enclosure of outlaws in such total institutions as prisons or asylums – whose materiality is circumscribed by universal norms of punishment – is now articulated to a process whereby diverse networks spreading throughout society structure the population through administrative-police procedures adapted to the specificities of each category of suspect. From the punishable offence laid down by a universal and general act of parliament, we are moving towards the suspicious circumstance whose contours are administratively defined by supple, malleable and particularist regulation. (See, for example, the changes made to the very definition of a *political offence*.) Thus,

while the law is evidently not defunct, it is undergoing a clear *retreat*.

The current decline of parliament and the growing weight of the state administration are linked to considerable changes in the institutional system of political parties, and thus in their precise position and role.

This transformation essentially concerns what we may call, in the most precise sense of the term, *the parties of power*: that is to say, parties which seek to participate, and do participate, in government according to a pattern of regular alteration that is organically fixed and anticipated by the existing state institutions as a whole (and not just by constitutional rules). I am now leaving aside the question of the precise class character of these parties and am intentionally adopting a more neutral and widely acceptable terminology in order not to enter into the well-known argument about who 'really represents' what. I do think, however, that we are talking of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties, in the political sense of the term: even though parties are never fully reducible to representation of a single class, and even though their nature cannot be identified with their electoral base. Anyway, in referring to *parties of power*, I include the traditional European social-democratic parties (whose electorate is largely working-class) – from British Labourism to Scandinavian or West German social democracy. But while the manner in which it does so is quite different, the more general transformation of the party system also concerns the European Communist parties and certain socialist parties (especially the present-day French Socialist Party). For to the extent that they form part of the institutional sphere, how could they not be affected by such change? The problem is fairly clear in the case of the current evolution of the Italian Communist Party.

We can now witness a loosening of the *ties of representation* between the power bloc and the parties of power – ties which bring into the arena either (and often at the same time) certain fractions of the bloc, alliances among these fractions, or characteristic alliances-compromises struck in a more or less open fashion between these fractions and some of the dominated classes (sections

of the working class, as well as the old and new petty bourgeoisie and the peasantry). The classical example of this latter phenomenon is the 'republican synthesis' expressed by the Radical Party in France. Now, this refers us to the type of hegemony which monopoly capital, through its massive preponderance, is able to establish over the other components of the power bloc and over the popular masses as a whole – in short, to the narrowing socio-political foundations of monopoly capital. It also refers us to the intensification of those generic elements of political crisis which result in the hidden crisis affecting the hegemony of monopoly capital and of the bourgeoisie as a whole. This loosening of the ties of representation, sometimes nearly to breaking-point, accompanies changes in the institutional position of the parties of power. It accompanies them, but it is not the prime cause. In some respects, the changing position of these parties within the institutional framework is the factor that determines their representation crisis – a crisis which in turn continually weakens their institutional role. The state administration-bureaucracy does not come to the forefront to make up for the crisis of parties; it is rather the dislodging of parties from their traditional position that provokes the crisis and, in turn, accentuates the role of the administration.

The administration had long been developing into the *central* site at which the unstable equilibrium of compromises between the power bloc and the popular masses was elaborated within that bloc itself. But while this process shifted the centre of political decision-making, it always unfolded predominantly through the action of parties, serving as the main vectors of various socio-economic interests at the heart of the administration. Typical in this respect were the Third and Fourth Republics in France, under which the role of the state administration increased (a process wrongly attributed to the apparent permanence of the administration as opposed to ministerial instability) at the same time that the political parties assumed a more important role within the institutional configuration. Parliament was left with a not insignificant function of control; and it continued to occupy a specific place in the legitimation process by allowing the representatives of the popular

masses to give a certain expression to their interests within the State. Today, however, the Executive and the administration monopolize the role of organizing and directing the State with regard to the power bloc as a whole: that is to say, they elaborate the bloc's long-term political interests and ensure the reproduction of its hegemony. They therefore concentrate the role of legitimizing the State in the eyes of the dominated classes. As a result, the place of the parties of power not only declines but undergoes complete transformation. This change has important effects on the entire state structure, involving representative democracy in a radically new mode of political functioning.

Much attention has already been paid to the evolution of parliament into a 'registration chamber' – a term first used by Harold Laski. Nearly everywhere, draconian limits are set upon parliament's powers of control, investigation, verification, criticism, proposal and suggestion. The full-scale *de jure* and, above all, *de facto* shift in governmental responsibility away from parliament to the summits of the Executive has brought with it a decisive curtailment of parliament's authority over the administration: government has become autonomous from parliament, and the administration distanced from the process of national representation. While the opposition is the first to be hit, especially when it is not content with the role of Her Majesty's loyal opposition, these limitations of parliamentary power also affect majority deputies: they too are reduced to the position of government foot-soldiers and voting-fodder.

Moreover, this curbing of the power of the people's representatives does not stop with parliament. In the past, the real functioning of political mechanisms was marked by the manifold links, of an organic if extra-parliamentary nature, that existed between deputies and the state administration. Asserting their parliamentary power in the face of government, deputies would directly intervene as valid interlocutors of the administration through a whole series of codified channels and circuits which were not, however, inscribed in constitutional documents. In this way, they mediated and expressed particular demands and interests,

appearing before the administration in their capacity of people's delegates who legitimately represented such interests as components of the national interest. Even though it did not take an institutionalized form, that was indeed one of the essential functions of the representative system. Not only did deputies and political parties represent the people in parliament; they also represented it in relation to every level of the state bureaucracy. Deputies were thus directly involved in decision-making within the administration; and political elaboration resulted from a process in which the administration and government were closely intertwined with parliamentary deputies and political parties.

The remarkable thing today is that the decline of parliament runs parallel to a process whereby *the ties of representation between deputies and State are being broken*. The state bureaucracy has shut itself up in a watertight container, almost completely blocking the access channel formerly open to deputies and political parties as legitimate representatives of the 'national interest'. This applies above all to the opposition, but also affects majority deputies, or rather the great majority of them. The party-deputy-administration circuit is now a restricted area, almost exclusively embracing the summit of the Executive, various ministers and the Cabinet. In general, deputies have access to the administration only in capacities other than that of national-popular representatives: when they express particular local interests (for example, through possessing a mayor's mandate) or, most often, when they directly embody dominant economic interests.

Our second question concerns relations between the state administration and the government. Particularly in France, it is customary to lay undue emphasis on the near-total autonomy supposedly enjoyed by the administration in dealings with various ministers. Does not everyone know that the real power is exercised not by government, but by the heads of ministries, or even by the famous *grands corps* of the French state, ENA graduates, elite public works engineers, and graduates of the *Ecole Polytechnique*? Is it not common knowledge that ministers have virtually no latitude in selecting the civil servants with whom they work; or that the most

recent form of the 'French disease' is the impotence of Gaullist ministers in relation to the state bureaucracy? Everyone talks here of the epic battle waged by Edgar Pisani with his Ministry of Agriculture apparatus, or by Albin Chalandon with the highways department of his Ministry of Supply and Housing.

Now, this conception of things is false, even if it contains some elements of truth. Contradictions within the Executive have no genuinely intrinsic significance, despite the fact that they are quite real and that they traverse the entire administration rather than just concerning relations between the government and the upper reaches of the state bureaucracy. They are not a kind of disjunction in the political system, but constitute an organic feature of decision-making. Conflictual relations between government and administration often testify to resistances peculiar to the structure of the state apparatus and to the bureaucratic mode of organization. These are also manifested in a certain rigidity of that apparatus vis-à-vis the bourgeoisie itself, being expressed less in resistance to the concrete nature of the government's policy-objectives than in the general lack of adaptation to change characteristic of the bureaucracy's inertia and adherence to the *status quo*.

Keeping these reservations in mind, we are still left with an important element: authoritarian statism is marked by *the hold of the summits of the Executive over the upper administration and by the increased political control of the former over the latter*. The state bureaucracy's growing independence of parliamentarians has continually strengthened the subordination of its own summits to the presidential and governmental Executive. The evolution follows different paths in different countries, referring much more to a series of institutional mutations than to a matter of personalities. Even in France, these mutations are of a well-defined character: the political subordination of the administration to the summits of the State stands out clearly from the previous situation, whether the change is expressed in the Cabinet's enhanced attributions and role as the effective centre of guidance and control of the administration; or in the interministerial structures established at every level under the control of the government and the superabundant personnel of

Matignon and the Elysée; or in the series of hidden networks bypassing the traditional civil-service hierarchy and the horizontal dispersion of political decision-making centres within the State.

This political subordination is now quite indispensable: the administration is no longer the apparatus which, with greater or lesser initiative and resistance, used to be charged mainly with execution of policy. Thus placed under the authority of the Executive, the state bureaucracy is becoming not merely the principal site, but also the principal *actor* in the elaboration of state policy. No longer is it a question of striking political compromises on the political arena – that is, of publicly elaborating the hegemonic interests in the form of a national interest. The various economic interests are now directly present as such within the administration. More precisely, the massive hegemony of monopoly capital is everywhere realized under the aegis of the administration and the Executive: in France as elsewhere, the policy of the monopolies has been essentially negotiated outside parliament.

Here too, the crucial question is not the social origin of the administrative personnel or of a ‘power elite’ functioning now as managers of big capital, now as the leadership of state affairs. This interchangeability is the mere consequence of institutional changes and does not have the importance often attached to it. It is true that, in France, the *grandes écoles* (among others, the *Ecole Nationale d’Administration* and the *Polytechnique*) are the breeding-grounds for the managerial personnel of both the big companies and the State. But the movement is essentially from the State towards private business (‘back home’), very rarely the reverse; even the Cabinet is mainly composed of ex-civil-servants. What is involved here is the creation of centres for the direct expression of big economic interests within the administration: just as it treats the monopoly fractions of capital, above all the relevant company directors, as its favoured interlocutors, the state administration itself becomes the legitimate representative of monopoly interests seen as the embodiment of ‘technological progress’, ‘industrial exigencies’ or ‘economic might’, and as the foundation of ‘the nation’s greatness’. Conversely, it falls to the administration to constitute or present

monopoly interests as the 'general' or 'national' interest, and thus to assume the role of organizing monopoly capital. Whole sections of the administrative apparatus (e.g., the Ministry of Industry, the leadership of the Finance Ministry, the Plan Commissariat) are structurally organized as networks involving the specific presence of hegemonic interests within the State. This is combined with institutionalization of a veritable web of informal circuits (committees, permanent or *ad hoc* commissions, working groups, delegations, working parties) – a process which serves the same ends.

It is not that the other fractions of capital do not also have bridgeheads and props within the administration, nor that the latter takes no account of the struggles of the popular masses. Those other fractions are present within the administrative structure in an economic-corporative form (various 'professional interests'), while popular demands appear there mainly in a reformist, trade-unionist expression. In fact, the 'reformist' trade unions are now directly inserted in the administrative structure: their integration is no longer just a question of their political orientation – which, after all, is an old story – but refers to their virtual assimilation to the institutional materiality of the administrative structure (e.g., in Sweden and West Germany). Naturally, this belies their alleged role as countervailing powers so much celebrated by the champions of pluralist neo-liberalism.

We know the initial, most evident effects of this veritable turn at the institutional level. State policy is elaborated under the sign of *secrecy*, now established as a permanent matter of State through hidden mechanisms and a regime of administrative procedures that almost entirely escapes the control of public opinion. This represents a considerable change in the elementary principles of bourgeois representative democracy itself. Thus, the principle of public knowledge is completely discarded in favour of an institutionally recognized principle of secrecy – see, in France, the current operation of 'professional secrecy' or the duty of 'professional discretion'. But although secrecy is indispensable to monopoly hegemony, it should not be confused with genuine dumbness

striking the State at every point. (Indeed, as the media show, the summits of the Executive have never been as talkative as they are today.) Nor does this secrecy cover just tricks and scandals, even if we include the conspiratorial colonization of the administrative apparatus by monopoly capital. In its present-day form, that structural mode of functioning of the state administration, bureaucratic secrecy, is carried to its extreme limit. It therefore indicates not so much a perversion of the administration as a rather more disturbing phenomenon: namely, the emergence of the administrative and governmental apparatus as the dominant state structure and the major centre for elaborating political decisions. In its very framework, this apparatus perfectly embodies the distance between leaders and led, as well as the hermetic insulation of power from democratic control.

This situation has much broader effects. The bureaucracy was always the state institution that most rebelled against the principles of representative democracy – a hardly surprising fact if we consider that, in the last analysis, this democracy was erected precisely in order to place institutional limits upon the privileges bequeathed to the administration by the Absolutist State. This is the meaning of the *de jure*, law-based State serving as a barrier to the arbitrariness of the bureaucracy; it is also the meaning of public and political liberties, demarcated as institutional structures of resistance to the permanent central state apparatus. Redistribution of the loci of power and their new configuration under representative democracy were based on a fundamental idea which traverses, with the force of evidence, modern political thought from Rousseau to Marx: namely, the idea that state bureaucracy and the requirements of democracy stand in a heterogeneous relationship to each other. In this connection, it does not matter how much the bourgeoisie sought to use representative democracy in order to submit the central apparatus of the feudal-Absolutist State to its own interests, thereby identifying them with the expression of democracy (cf. the origins of democratic rights in property ownership).

Thus, popular demands come to have a more and more problematic place in the elaboration of state policy: not only

because the interests of monopoly capital are furthered by such changes, but also because the administrative apparatus is materially organized in such a way as to exclude popular needs from its field of perception. Furthermore, the irrepressible shift in the centre of gravity towards the state bureaucracy unfailingly involves a considerable restriction of political liberties, understood as forms of public control over state activity. This process unfolds to a degree exceeding that envisaged by government plans, and according to an intrinsic logic which the summits of the State find difficult to control. Blotches of all kinds tend to become the rule almost everywhere: strictly speaking, they are no longer the exception to a rule (i.e., the law) posed elsewhere, but express the specific regulation operated by a bureaucracy that has become the legitimate creator of social norms. These blotches do not signify that governmental power fails to subordinate the administration to itself, nor are they necessarily under the remote control of the summits of the Executive; they are rather the inescapable consequence of institutional changes and of the logic of the administration-bureaucracy.

Real power is thus rapidly being concentrated in tighter and tighter structures, tending to move towards the pole of the governmental and administrative summits. Always of a more or less fictitious nature, the already greatly reduced separation of legislative, executive and judicial powers in the bourgeois State is itself subject to final elimination. This process is displacing the limited distribution of power among various centres that used to characterize the configuration of the State. In the same way, the political *centralism* of the state apparatus is continually being strengthened. Despite all the decentralization reforms of a techno-administrative character, real power is shifting away from the commune or region towards the central state apparatus. Although reforms have become necessary for a bourgeoisie constricted by the ponderousness inherent in bureaucratic centralism, they can make no change to the political centralism of the state apparatus. Indeed, this is even reinforced by such measures – as the vicissitudes of decentralization in France amply demonstrate.

The intensified concentration and centralization of power naturally exerts a heavy influence towards the curtailment of democratic liberties. For while this evolution in the character of power derives from socio-economic and political changes, it also flows from the specifically bureaucratic logic according to which statism begets statism, and authoritarianism begets authoritarianism. It merges with this logic in a single snowball, accelerating its rhythm and adjusting its path (especially in a country like France, where that path has been inscribed in the State for a very long time). Nevertheless, this involves not merely a logic of bureaucratization, but is bound up with the changing political role of the state administration.

This also accounts for the tendency of power to be *personalized* in the man at the top of the Executive – what we may term a personalized presidential system. Contrary to quite a number of juridical-constitutionalist analyses, this phenomenon does not really correspond to a process in which power assumes a Bonapartist character: that is, according to a somewhat imprecise political image of the original Bonapartism, a process in which real power is assumed by a single man at the expense of the other governmental-administrative sites of power. It is true that constitutional documents sometimes ascribe to the head of the Executive what are commonly termed ‘exorbitant powers’. But personalized presidentialism does not involve the vanishing of all but a truly despotic and insulated power. It functions much rather as the focal point of various administrative power centres and networks, making them converge at the apex of power; it thus accords with the contemporary political role of the administrative structure. Even more than in the past, the man at the top of the Executive is also the hostage of a political-administrative mechanism which, to a large degree, allocates him the pre-eminent position.

It should be remembered that, when we refer to the growing concentration or centralism of power, we are talking of a tendency of development. For the State is not wholly in the hands of monopoly capital any more than is its economic apparatus. Underlying the process of concentration-centralization are important

inner-state contradictions: indeed, the current sharpening of contradictions within the power bloc arouses growing contradictions within the State itself. The heightened concentration and centralism of power do not really correspond to uniform homogenization of the State, and even constitute a response on the part of the State to its mounting internal contradictions. These contradictions set up dislocating centripetal effects which refer also, or even above all, to the popular struggles traversing the State. Just as in the case of the state economic apparatus, this evolution should not make us think of a dissociative reduplication of the State: that is to say, it should not suggest that there is, over here, a purely monopolistic super-apparatus located accordingly in the 'central regions' or 'summits' of the State (i.e., monopolistic concentration-centralization of the State) and, over there, a decentred, powerless construction that is the refuge only of the other fractions of capital. While the modern concentration-centralization of the State does correspond to the nature of monopoly hegemony, the process unfolds in a much more complex fashion. Contradictions between monopoly and other fractions of capital, or between the power bloc and the popular masses, *are expressed right at the heart of the State, in its central regions and summits*. Inevitably, therefore, they traverse the focal point represented by the top man; there is not *one* president, but *several in one*. Hesitation, indecision and blunders are due to the situation itself, rather than to the psychology of the given personality. Conversely, many studies of regional or municipal powers have shown that the hegemony of monopolistic capital spreads to the periphery of the State – a process that accompanies decomposition of the local bourgeoisie (which derives essentially from non-monopoly capital) and the shrinkage of the power of various notables in relation to the state administration.

The administration therefore tends to play a monopoly role in politically organizing social classes and ensuring hegemony; and in a parallel process, considerable changes are undergone by the parties of power (including many social-democratic parties). These parties now constitute veritable transmission belts for executive decisions, rather than being centres engaged in political elaboration

and in working out compromises and alliances around a more or less precise programme. In the past, even during earlier phases of monopoly capitalism and in the respective state forms, these parties maintained genuine ties of representation with social classes and, although their effective political role was already declining, they remained crucial networks in the formation of political ideology and a social consensus. Today, however, the legitimation process is shifting towards plebiscitary and purely manipulatory circuits (the media) dominated by the administration and the Executive.

This evolution has had an impact on the organization of the parties of power. Even if internal democracy and rank-and-file control over leadership groups was, in their case, never more than an illusion, and even if they were congenitally shaped by an iron law of bureaucratization expressing a more general political gulf between leaders and led, these parties nevertheless used to function as channels for the circulation of information and demands, which, emerging from the base and politically handled within the party, would reach the leading centres of the State. They thus maintained an organic vertical flow of reciprocal influences – that very flow which is now bypassed almost exclusively by administrative networks and techniques (inquiries, opinion polls, general information, political ‘marketing’).

The distance between the leader and members or sympathizers of these parties has never been as great as it is today. But even the range of available political choices has been considerably reduced, as is demonstrated by the famous bi-partisan alternation of government which now characterizes most Western democracies (the United States, Great Britain, West Germany, etc.). It is true that these parties never offered a real political alternative to the reproduction of capitalism; yet they made it possible to choose between centres that formulated bourgeois policy in different ways. Today, they differ over little more than the aspect of administrative-executive policy that should be popularized: their propaganda takes up one and the same policy of the administration and Executive, differentiated according to the class which they address. This, then, is the famous ‘end of ideology’, the obliteration of distinctive

ideological features and the transformation of parties into catch-all organizations. This is not to say that differences have become purely and simply fictitious (as the tweedledum-tweedledee image suggests). Differences between the Independent Republicans and the Radicals in France, Christian Democracy and Social Democracy in West Germany, or the Democratic Party and Republican Party in the United States, do indeed cover real contradictions among fractions of the power bloc – contradictions which concern their specific interests and the policy variant to be adopted in relation to the popular masses. But these parties are not the sites where such contradictions are really handled. They are rather the sounding-boards for contradictions at work in the dominant centre, namely the administration and the Executive. Nothing demonstrates this more clearly than the way in which the components of the French presidential majority currently operate.

Transformation of the parties of power, transformation of their personnel from class representatives acting in the summits of the State to state representatives and plenipotentiaries (or even *missi dominici*) among social classes, transformation of the same kind in the role of parliament and of deputies – all these developments involve an important shift away from representative democracy towards authoritarian statism. For the organic role once fulfilled by political parties was an essential component of representative democracy: indeed, so suspicious were the bourgeoisie and the central state apparatus even of bourgeois and petty bourgeois parties that they officially recognized their constitutional right to exist only at a very late date (1945 in France). In however limited a way, and of course in combination with direct popular struggle, the representative party system was always an essential mechanism whereby citizens exerted some control over state activity and ensured a certain maintenance of democratic liberties. Within the modern State, extension or curtailment, retention or suppression of political freedoms was always a direct function of the existence and role of parties. Fascism, military dictatorship and Bonapartism have suppressed not only working-class or revolutionary parties, but all the traditional democratic parties, including bourgeois and petty-

bourgeois ones. They have done so because these parties, while discharging class functions, expressed the presence of certain popular demands of which they had to take account. The maintenance of representative democracy and democratic liberties is strictly correlated not just with plurality of parties, but also with parties functioning in an organic manner and at a certain distance from the State's central administrative apparatus. It is the present subversion of this mode of functioning – often disguised by a continuing plurality of parties – which determines the curtailment of democratic liberties under authoritarian statism.

Of course, this is all the more real in that the party system is undergoing much broader changes, which affect every party in its relationship to the state administration. Those parties, in particular, which used to be located outside the circle of power continued, until the present phase, not only to exercise a role of parliamentary control, but also to function as tribunes of the popular masses vis-à-vis the administration. But that function, too, is now radically called into question: how many socialist deputies, not to mention communist deputies, today have any real access to the French state administration – at least in their capacity as people's representatives? Authoritarian statism hardly leaves parties with any choice: either they must subordinate themselves to the administration, or else they must give up all access to it. Citizens are obliged to face the administration head-on, and it is not surprising that, beyond their participation in elections, they are generally disaffected with parties that are supposed to represent them in the state administration. We know only too well that, besides the considerable restriction of democratic liberties already incurred, this situation lays the ground for a possible evolution of power towards Bonapartism.

⁷ See amongst others E. Suleiman, *Les hauts fonctionnaires et la politique*, Paris 1976, as well as the works by J. Sallois, M. Cretin, P. Gremion, A. Joxe.

The Dominant Mass Party

The present changes at the level of the State also entail the emergence and specific role of a *dominant mass party* as the *state party par excellence*. In the case of an alternation of two parties, this role falls successively on the one and the other. But contrary to certain superficial analyses, such alternation does not change in the slightest the current phenomenon of the dominant mass party, which is structurally necessary for the functioning of authoritarian statism. It is not the twenty-year persistence of Gaullism that is the main cause of what is called the 'UDR State' in France, although this has helped to accentuate the phenomenon.

The movement in which political organization devolves from parties to the administration-Executive is not a simple one. The permutation of this function among the various state apparatuses always runs up against obstacles deriving from their specific materiality (in this case, the materiality of the state administration). Even when, as in the United States, its upper personnel is replaced *en bloc* with a change in government, the administration is the superembodiment of bourgeois state continuity and presents the characteristic features of rigidity and resistance. Most frequently, it is subject to *de jure* and *de facto* statutory regulations referring to the institutional permanence and hierarchical centralism that are bound up with the social division of labour within the administration itself. It is cemented by a specific ideology, whether the traditional republican one of the general interest or the neo-technocratic one of

efficiency. And being reproduced by co-optation, the administration also exhibits division and fragmentation into clans, coteries and factions (the *grands corps* in France, for example) each with its own logic. This raises considerable problems, above all since the system of administrative procedures becomes the principal structure for organizing hegemony where a certain democratic reality is maintained (as is the case with the authoritarian statism of the present period). Contrary to what is often said, the administration's current role does not at all involve some kind of neo-corporatism. Various interests find specific expression in the administration and have to be dealt with there in a political manner. Quite different is the functioning of a corporatist State, which is an exceptional form of the bourgeois State. When it has functioned as the central network of corporatist institutions, the bureaucratic administration has never played the dominant political role – neither in the various examples of fascism nor in corporatist-type military dictatorships. Such forms of State always dispose of a political apparatus (the fascist party, the army, the political police) which is distinct from the corporatist administration.

In a democratic framework, then, the administration is not transformed by spontaneous generation into an effective political party of the whole bourgeoisie acting under the hegemony of monopoly capital; the process constantly runs up against certain limits. Hence derives the need for a dominant mass party, whose mission is more than to serve as the transmission-belt relaying bureaucratic decisions to the base. To be precise, its role is to unify and homogenize the state administration; to control and propel (in the direction of general government policy) the cohesiveness of its various branches and sub-apparatuses – both horizontal (inter-branch) and vertical (central apparatus, regional apparatuses); and finally, to ensure the administration's loyalty to the summits of the Executive. Such unification and cohesion is absolutely indispensable to the political mission which the administration is now alone in carrying out. The dominant party plays the role of policing the administration – of watching over and protecting the bureaucratic apparatus. Without it, this devolved role, which exists side by side

with the governmental heights of the Executive, could be fulfilled only to a very partial degree. For the politico-administrative control exercised by those heights constantly runs up against the multiform resistance of the state bureaucracy. Similarly, disciplinary measures intended to keep the administration in line encounter the resistance of the trade unions and public opinion – although, as is shown by the situation in France and by the extreme, if not untypical, case of *Berufsverbot* in West Germany, there is currently a tendency for such measures to increase. The dominant state party therefore functions as a parallel network, placing the entire administration in a relationship of strict political subordination to the summits of the Executive. In practice, this can only be accomplished by a *single, dominant* party, itself highly unified and structured; were such a role to be divided and distributed among several parties, it would only add to the defects requiring correction.

The dominant party itself must be tightly controlled by the summits of the Executive (the President, the Prime Minister) – whether these have reached their position through controlling and guiding just such a party, or whether they have been able to bring it under their control precisely through becoming the commanding heights of the State. We can recognize here one aspect of the de Gaulle/Pompidou policy towards the Gaullist party-movement (it must be not a party like before but a movement – and yet ...), and also Giscard d'Estaing's problems with Chirac and the UDR after he had failed either to make a dominant state party out of the republicans or to bring the Gaullist party under control. However minor they may at first seem in terms of political (class) relevance, these problems nevertheless led to the present institutional crisis.

The main role of such a party is not, therefore, to represent the interests of big capital with regard to the administration, for that can now perfectly well be done in a direct fashion. In France, for example, the hegemony of monopoly capital within the State is not the result of a 'UDR-State', that is to say, of a process whereby the UDR, acting as the instrument of big capital, is supposed to have colonized a neutral administration. Contrary to such an image of lily-white civil servants distinguished from corrupt bourgeois

politicians, it is much more that the party's subservience to big business is one consequence of its general role as commissar attached to the administration. It can play its role only by being directly present (as a state party) at the heart of the administration. But this presence is not the main factor in politicizing the administration: it is rather the effect of the political role that has now devolved upon the state administration – an effect which, in turn, extends the scope of such politicization. Charged with the role of organizing hegemony and directly confronted with socio-economic interests that it must itself handle politically, the state administration is less and less successful in maintaining the fictitious distinction between administrative and political decisions. Of course, it was never neutral in any real sense; but it is now being openly and massively politicized as the decision-making centres become lodged in its own circuits. In a parallel course, the dominant party lays siege to the upper reaches of the administration: it pushes its pawns forward, monopolizes the command-posts for its members or sympathizers, expels or neutralizes persistent offenders by shunting them into side-tracks, breaks the traditional civil-service hierarchy, and bends state institutions in order to create the best conditions for action. This process unfolds not so much under the direction of elected party officials and deputies (at least insofar as they act in those capacities) as under the direction of the various barons and managers who control the party.

It is a two-way trajectory: given the direct politicization of the administration, civil servants gravitate towards the dominant party just as much as the party propels its trusted men into the administration. Now inscribed in the materiality of institutions is a veritable symbiosis of the state apparatus and the dominant party. Most strikingly in France, both the government and the leading circles of this party are more and more composed of civil servants.

A number of consequences follow: the restricted circulation of political personnel; the emergence of multiform corporatist interests based on the holding of posts; the distribution of state sinecures; the diversion of public funds for party aims; the trading in influence between dominant party and State; and the subservience of that

party to big business. Although these have always been features of bourgeois States, they are now assuming quite prodigious dimensions; and although they are doubtless secondary phenomena, they considerably heighten the resistance of the dominant party-State to democratic alternatives. Leaving aside the possible dangers for the dominant classes themselves, loss of governmental power would both strip away a whole series of material privileges and threaten with disintegration a party whose importance rests precisely with its role in the State.

To repeat: this development stems only secondarily from the long period without alternation of government (the UDR period in France, Christian Democracy's protracted rule in West Germany and its maintenance to this day in Italy). For the functioning of a dominant party transcends such changeovers, often actually involving alternation of more than one dominant party. Moreover, where there is a fairly regular alternation of two parties (the United States, Great Britain, West Germany), we can witness the creation of genuine *inter-party* networks: through intermingling of the forces, personnel and structures of the two dominant parties, there crystallizes a permanent web of circuits which, so to speak, functions as a *single-party centre* lodged in the central state apparatus. This centre goes far beyond mere personal relations among members of a single 'power elite', such as are invoked by certain perspicacious writers (most notably, Wright Mills) in order to explain the birth of this phenomenon.⁸ In fact, it is now anchored in the materiality of the dominant parties' structures, which is itself articulated with the new materiality of the state apparatus. The single-party centre also serves to exercise genuine control over the administration. But it does so in relation to the *Others*: not only those who represent a genuine political alternative, but *any other* who escapes the centre's control and thereby becomes for it a dangerous revolutionary. The single-party centre finds its identity only by establishing the other as an enemy.

It would be quite wrong to reduce this phenomenon to a distinct and, after all, rather old question: namely, the absence of a *real political alternative* at the level of the parties of power. Nor,

therefore, can we content ourselves with the traditional critique of the 'formal character' of the pluralist system. For the present situation does not curtail the operation of democracy merely because of the restricted political choice offered to citizens. Over and above the question of an *alternative*, there is the more prosaic one of *alternation*; and alternation has existed in the past even when it did not involve an alternative. Now, what kind of alternation can there be today, given that the interchangeability of the dominant parties of power is often inscribed in that new single-party network which is apparently being consolidated in the Western two-party system? Who today would dream of denying that this process sets draconian limits on the most elementary forms of democratic control that used to exist even in the absence of a political alternative – who, that is, except Raymond Aron and other belated bards of advanced liberal democracy? For them, the Union of the Left alternative unfortunately excludes the possibility of alternation in France – as if genuine alternation could be found where such an alternative does not exist. Of course, as I said earlier, present-day authoritarian statism is not a disguised form of totalitarianism, similar to regimes with a one-party system in the strict sense of the term. Still, the institutionalization of a single-party centre says a great deal about the transformation of the democratic framework in which it is inserted.

Let us return to the now-structural symbiosis of the State and a dominant mass party. Although principally to be explained in terms of the need for political control over the administration, this phenomenon is also dependent upon changes in the procedures of legitimation. In fact, this allows us to understand why it is a *mass* party that is involved. The consensus-producing structures are becoming concentrated in the state administration and moving away from political parties or other apparatuses previously specialized in this function (the school, the cultural apparatus, the family). This corresponds to important modifications both in the content of the dominant ideology and in the modalities of its reproduction and inculcation. But here too, the movement runs up against limits connected with the materiality of the administrative network – a

materiality that is grounded on a characteristic ‘separation’ from the popular masses – and with the specificity of the ideological mechanisms. Hence derives the necessity of a dominant mass party: that is to say, not a site for the elaboration of ideology, but a relay-station that will transmit the state ideology to the popular masses and contribute as an appendage to the plebiscitary legitimation of the state administration and the Executive. For this role is only partially fulfilled by the media and by the characteristic personalization of the summits of the State.

Thus, even when it does not lead to the consolidation of a single-party centre, this organic symbiosis of the State and the dominant party induces significant institutional changes that point towards the decline of representative democracy and democratic liberties.

However, above all in France, this situation also involves dangers for the Left in the eventuality of its coming to power. Of course, neither in France nor elsewhere can there be any question of bracketing together the left parties with the majority parties of power; nor are we seeking to question the intentions of any left party – *quite the contrary*. I say ‘quite the contrary’, because what is involved is precisely a structural symbiosis of the state apparatus and a dominant mass party; and just as that symbiosis is inscribed in the materiality of the present-day State, so are the position and role of such a party *written between the lines* of institutional reality. Thus, whatever the intentions of the left parties, there is a danger that one of them may be led – by the force of circumstance, as it were – to occupy the position of a dominant mass party. Unless the State is radically transformed by the Left in power, such an evolution will constantly be threatened – and will itself threaten to prolong the current state of oppositional rights.

It would seem that, in France, this *objective situation* concerns essentially and above all the Socialist Party. It is not that the party as a whole is tarnished with some original and indelible strain of ‘class collaboration’; but it is especially marked by this danger for evident institutional reasons (the administration’s attitude towards it, its implantation in the municipal and regional networks, the weight of its electoral apparatus and parliamentary deputies, and so

on). Let me make myself quite clear: the issue is not whether the Socialist Party should or should not be more important than the Communist Party, since what concerns us here goes far beyond discussion on the 'balance' of forces within the Left. The question is rather: what must take place in order that the Socialist Party should not occupy the position and play the role of a dominant mass party? Indeed, some of its own leaders seem to be aware of the danger. No-one is suggesting that a 'SP-State' would be the same as a 'UDR-State'. But regardless of the nature of the party that occupies it, the institutional situation of a dominant mass party carries with it a certain restriction of democratic control and democratic liberties. It threatens to make a dead letter out of the Left's planned measures for democratization of the State and for restoring the specific role of political parties in the exercise of democracy.

At any rate, we should be quite clear that authoritarian statism corresponds to important changes in democracy. These transformations may be summarized as follows: greater exclusion of the masses from the centres of political decision-making; widening of the distance between citizens and the state apparatus, just when the State is invading the life of society as a whole; an unprecedented degree of state centralism; increased attempts to regiment the masses through 'participation' schemes; in essence, therefore, a sharpening of the authoritarian character of political mechanisms. This authoritarianism affects more than just the bureaucratic administration or even just the state apparatuses as a whole; and it does not involve merely an increase in organized physical repression or ideological manipulation. Going beyond these, it asserts itself in the establishment of new power techniques and in the development of various practices, channels and props intended to create a new materiality of that social body upon which power is exercised. Such a materiality differs considerably from that of the national-popular body politic composed of free citizens-individuals who are equal before the law – or, to put it another way, from that of the institutionalized dissociation between public and private which is the cornerstone of traditional representative democracy.

Rooted in the very processes that govern the new role of the state administration-bureaucracy, and lodged in the main exemplary centre of the administration, this new matrix of the exercise of power radiates through every sphere of social life. Even if the space of the State is correctly given a broad characterization, this matrix goes far beyond the state apparatuses in which it yet achieves its consummate elaboration. Although it rests upon, and is grafted on to, a quite real and growing statization of social life, the new mode of authoritarian-statist regulation surpasses even this to become a truly universal code, carrying inscribed within it the functioning of power in the totality of social relations. We are not referring here to a merely analogical or mimetic transposition of a 'model' of the State's exercise of power to the non-state structures (as we would be tempted to do, if we thought of the State as the prime cause and exclusive source of all power). But nor are we talking of some archetypal diagram, which, in a manner immanent to all power, rules a series of molecular micro-powers in which the State itself is dissolved. In the last analysis, the matrix refers to new forms of the social division of labour: while it is certainly present, as an original mould, in the various social relations, it is currently elaborated and ritualized above all in the state administrative structure on which social relations converge. *All contemporary power is functional to authoritarian statism.*

Authoritarian statism is thus distinct from totalitarianism and cannot be regarded as a new type of fascism or as a process of creeping fascism. Nevertheless, it is unlike the previous democratic forms of State. It does not merely carry the seeds or certain scattered elements of fascism, but crystallizes their organic arrangement in a permanent structure running parallel to the official State. This structure is not simply kept available by the dominant classes, but continually intersects the official State in the day-to-day functioning and exercise of power. There are numerous examples of this: the obscuring of each state branch or apparatus (army, police, judicial system, etc.) through dislocation into formal and clearly visible networks, on the one hand, and nuclei under the tight control of the Executive summits, on the other; the constant

displacement of the real power centres from the former to the latter – a mechanism implicit in the administration's present role, which is overseen and guaranteed by the dominant party; the massive development of parallel state networks of a public, semi-public or para-public character – networks whose function is to cement, unify and control the nuclei of the state apparatus (in France, the SAC, the parallel police, etc.) and whose creation is directly orchestrated by the commanding heights of the State in symbiosis with the dominant party. It would be only too easy to continue the list.

Finally, modifications to the national aspect of the State are today also inserted into this process of transformation. Elsewhere, in arguing against a whole current which regards the present internationalization of capital as a straightforward delinquency of European national States in the face of multinational companies, the American super-State or the super-State of United Europe, I have shown that the national State is still of relevance. Nevertheless, it does exhibit important changes in this respect – changes which I shall not mention here, except to point out that they are themselves not directly due to external factors (that is, to the 'pressure' of other States). These factors weigh upon each national State only insofar as they are internalized within it and inscribed in its own transformations. Indeed, it is under the aegis of these changes that the decline of national sovereignty is currently taking place – not only in relation to the policies of European governments, but also with regard to the institutional materiality of the various States. It is above all in that parallel State, with its deep politico-administrative texture, that flesh and blood are given to the trans-state networks. From police and secret service 'co-operation' to the various transnational decision-making processes, the official international institutions are just the tip of the iceberg. Few people suspect me of being interested in political fiction. But how can one help fantasizing about the international dimensions of that single-party centre? The famous Trilateral Commission perhaps gives us a foretaste.

⁸ C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite*, London 1960; Ralph Miliband, *The State in Capitalist Society*, London 1969; and Pierre Birnbaum, *Les sommets de l'Etat*, Paris 1977.

The Weakening of the State

Authoritarian statism does not correspond to a univocal strengthening of the State: it rather involves the dual aspect of strengthening-weakening, given that the transformations which mark the State sharpen the generic elements of political crisis. It is also the State's response to that sharpening, and even a response to its own crisis at the point where it is actually unfolding. Now, this weakening and state of crisis offer fresh possibilities to the Left.

1. While the changing role of the administration leads to its direct politicization, *that politicization has a double meaning*. It takes place principally, and to a massive extent, in the upper reaches of the administration, on the side of the government majority and to the benefit of the right. But it also develops on the left, at the very heart of areas of the upper administration. There are many reasons for this development.

First of all, the administration remains strongly marked by the ideology of the general interest. Until not long ago, the relatively distinct competencies of administrative action and political decision still fostered self-justificatory illusions concerning the administration's political neutrality in the face of the massive hegemony of monopoly capital. But this is no longer the case. The displacement of the political mechanisms of hegemony to the heart of the administration has given a sharp jolt to these illusions and set up important political differentiations and polarizations.

To be sure, the juridico-political ideology of the general interest is giving way to a technocratic ideology of efficiency, economic progress, abundance and well-being. But this can function as an internal cement of the administration if and only if the economic process retains a certain appearance of technical neutrality. And it is precisely that which is becoming more and more difficult. The technocratic ideology according to which the State ensures efficiency and social well-being – an ideology that is the basis of the post-Keynesian State – is radically called into question by the economic crisis marking the present phase of capitalism. One section of the upper administration interprets the political causes of current reality as denoting its own historical bankruptcy – its inability to foresee, suppress or manage the economic crisis. Moreover, the laceration of national sovereignty involved in the internationalization of capital is exacerbated in a period of crisis (as European governments rush to place themselves under the American umbrella), thus releasing shock-waves within an administration that is attached to the national interest. All this leads to a clear distancing from political hegemony, even if it takes place in an ambiguous manner and with the limitations that I noted in Part One. As is well known, a significant proportion of the French upper administration, the *grands corps* and the *grandes écoles*, are now to be found in the Socialist Party. This development is all the more important in that it goes hand in hand with the left-radicalization of the SP (the Epinay Congress of 1972). In any case, it cannot be explained solely, or even principally, by the upper administration's opportunist preparedness to 'chance its luck' with a victorious Left (although that no doubt enters into it, given the Giscard-UDR-State blockage of the circulation of 'elites').

However, the reasons for this politicization go deeper still: the institutional change entailed by top Executive control of the administration are experienced by its personnel as a challenge to traditional corporatist privileges. Cabinet circumvention of the bureaucratic hierarchy; the horizontal networks under the control of the summits of the Executive; major governmental dislocation of statutory civil-service guarantees (regulations affecting careers,

promotion, etc.); direct penetration of the administrative apparatus by the dominant party – all these are reasons why, in the authoritarian State, a section of the upper administration takes an ambiguous and characteristically limited distance from the summits of the Executive.

In the intermediate and subaltern layers of the administration, this phenomenon is of much greater importance, sometimes taking the form of a massive leftward politicization of broad sectors of the state personnel. Here too, one factor involved is the changes in the materiality of the State. In part, it is a question of the considerable worsening of living conditions (earnings, pensions, etc.) and of the various privileges enjoyed by the traditional *Beamtentum* (the threat to job security from the massive growth of contract labour, the moving around of clerical staff, the obstruction of careers, and so on) – processes which correspond to the unprecedented expansion of the state apparatus as a whole. Still more important, however, are the new forms in which the social division of labour is reproduced within the institutional apparatus as a whole.⁹ The expansion of this apparatus, together with its current socio-economic and political role, deepens the tendency of division between manual and intellectual labour, such as it is reproduced at the very heart of the intellectual labour embodied by the State; this process is itself correlated with the emergence of new and more profound forms of the general division between intellectual and manual labour – mainly in the sphere of productive labour, but also in the whole of society. This deepening social division is reflected, at the level of the state apparatus, in the growing distance between tasks (layers) of conception-direction and those of execution: in the decomposition of subordinate tasks into routinized elements; the concentration of knowledge-power in the summits of the apparatus; the monopolization of bureaucratic secrecy by more and more restricted leading circles; and the rising disciplinary authoritarianism within the apparatus itself. This division is realized in clearly-defined changes to the administrative labour process: the introduction of new methods for evaluating and controlling output; the development of mechanization and computer systems; and the new

techniques of ‘rationalizing budgetary allocation’ and ‘goal-oriented co-management’. Beneath their apparently technical character, such measures correspond both to the rising productivity of administrative labour and, equally important, to the control and political mastery which the top Executive exercises over the immense bureaucratic machinery. Combined with the tottering of the general interest ideology that used to cement the vertical unity of the administrative structure, the above evolution contributes to the leftward politicization of an important section of the intermediate and subaltern personnel of the state apparatus; or at any rate, it lays the material basis for such politicization.

However, the deepest reasons for the distancing of large sections of the administration from government policy are to be found in the struggle of the popular classes.

Today more than ever before, this struggle traverses the state apparatus itself and directly affects the administration. For it extends to wide sectors of the *new petty bourgeoisie*: that is, to such wage-earning middle layers as commercial, bank and insurance employees, members of the liberal professions, and intellectuals in the broad sense of the term. The new petty bourgeoisie now actively participates in popular struggles, especially those relating to collective consumption and the ‘quality’ of life (health, housing, transport, the environment, etc.); it is particularly sensitive to demands in these spheres because of its material conditions of existence. Its struggles therefore point to a fissure or an actual break in the alliance between the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie (more precisely, between monopoly capital and the new, wage-earning petty bourgeoisie). It is true that working-class struggles also reverberate within the state administration. But those of the petty bourgeoisie – especially of its intermediate and subaltern layers – traverse the administration in a much more direct fashion: not only because of the majority petty-bourgeois class origin of these layers, but above all because of their petty-bourgeois class determination. The entire history of capitalism demonstrates that a challenge to the bourgeois/petty-bourgeois alliance at the level of society finds expression in a challenge to that alliance at the very heart of the

State. As we know, the state apparatuses (and in particular, the administrative structure) often crystallize an alliance between the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie – one which takes the specific form of an alliance between the bourgeois summits and the petty-bourgeois intermediate and subaltern layers. A challenge to this alliance at the level of society provokes a break within the State, often expressing itself in the form of fissures between the summits and the other layers of the administration.

Furthermore, the state apparatus itself is increasingly becoming the target of popular struggle. Given the current withdrawal of political parties from the forward positions of power, and given the State's capillary penetration of more and more areas of social activity, the administrative structure stands exposed before the demands of the popular masses. It is, so to speak, caught between the hammer of the governmental apex and the anvil of social struggles: while being used as a front-line detachment against the popular masses, it also serves as a scapegoat for policy failures, cheerfully attributed, as the case may be, to 'resistance on the part of the existing structure', or to the 'bureaucratic ponderousness', excess zeal, 'inhumanity' or 'lack of understanding' of civil servants. Today, the government can make such accusations with a certain degree of plausibility, based as they are on the political role which it has itself assigned to the administration. Having become the target of multiform popular struggles, the administrative apparatus is less and less able to resort to the ideological safety-screen of its role as 'neutral arbiter' above social classes. Anyway, it no longer believes very much in the truth of that conception. The consensus crisis affecting the relationship between popular masses and state apparatus appears within the administration as a *resultant crisis of legitimation*. This is all the more so since the administration no longer has an external source of legitimacy in the ideological cover once provided by political parties or ideological apparatuses (the school, the family, etc.). Indeed, it is now permanently charged with elaboration, reproduction and inculcation of the dominant ideology and with the creation of an overall consensus. The state administration-bureaucracy now bears the brunt of demands for

legitimation, although it is less and less able to meet them. Thus, the legitimacy shortfall in relation to the popular masses contributes to the political changes which they are currently undergoing.

2. The second factor in the weakening of the State concerns the elaboration of government policy within the administrative apparatus. Despite the numerous palliative measures (political control over the administration, emergence of a dominant party), the administration is by its very nature unable to fulfil the role of organizing hegemony in the way that this is done by political parties. The organic functioning of a genuine party system allows the relationship of forces within the power bloc to be organized without major setbacks. Thus, conflicts among the various fractions of the bloc can be regulated; changes in the relationship of forces can be given supple and fluid expression in government policy; a long-term policy condensing the bloc's general political interest can be established; in short, hegemony can be organized through autonomous representation of the various fractions. The fact that the hegemony of monopoly capital requires a shift in this organizing role from parties to the administration cannot but involve considerable disadvantages for monopoly hegemony over the other components of the power bloc. Given the very nature of administrative procedures, regulation of conflicts and compromises within the bloc takes place in a more or less jerky and concealed manner – through abrupt movements, direct clashes between administrative sub-apparatuses and sub-bureaucracies, and through short-term bargains referring to individual cases. This contributes to the characteristic incoherence of present-day government policy, marked as it is by lack of a long-term, articulated strategy for the power bloc and by the absence of a global politico-ideological or 'social' project. Such flying blind is a most hazardous course for the functioning of class hegemony.

Moreover, the process whereby the representation of the various bloc components is refracted in administrative sub-ensembles also holds certain dangers. Not only does it sharpen contradictions within the administration by concentrating at a political level the corporatist-institutional fracturings peculiar to the state bureaucracy

(the *grands corps*, various ministries, branches of the administration); it releases just as much a dynamic leading in the opposite direction. Thus, such fracturing closely follows the contours of decision-making and considerably broadens contradictions arising out of the politicization of the administration. Disputes among various clans, factions and fiefs of the administration are extrapolated into political divisions, setting up shock-waves in the State that call into question its role as organizer of hegemony. According to the traditional image of *parliamentary cretinism*, the representatives of the bourgeoisie exhaust themselves in Byzantine, corporatist and secondary wrangles and turn aside from their role as political organizers. However, this is much too weak an image to characterize the present situation of quite unprecedented *administrative debility* – a situation which considerably destabilizes class hegemony.

Now, all this does not just concern the administrative apparatus in the narrow sense of the term (i.e., the civil service that plays the central political role). In the context of the more general transformations that characterize authoritarian statism, similar features appear among all state apparatuses and employees (the judicial system, the police, the army, the educational system, etc.). Given the peculiar institutional unity of the State, the shift in the centre of political decision-making towards the civil service also has an impact on these apparatuses: they are drawn into the politicization process of the state apparatus to the point where they become sub-centres of political decision-making in their respective spheres of competence. The new contradictions which mark the civil service thus reverberate throughout the state organism.

3. Lastly, authoritarian statism is itself partially responsible for creating new forms of popular struggle. In every country with which we are now concerned, we can see the emergence of struggles that have in view the exercise of direct, rank-and-file democracy. These struggles exhibit a characteristic anti-statism and express themselves in the mushrooming of self-management centres and networks of direct intervention by the masses in the decisions which affect them. If we consider the widespread character of the phenomenon – which

stretches from citizens' committees through various structures of popular control and self-defence to neighbourhood committees – it becomes clear that we are talking of something quite without precedent. Even though the movement is located 'at a distance' from the State, it sets up major dislocatory effects within the State itself. It is a phenomenon which marks both more traditional political struggles and, above all, such new struggles as those associated with the women's and ecological movements and the campaign to improve the quality of life. Not only does authoritarian statism fail to enclose the masses in its disciplinary web or to 'integrate' them in its authoritarian circuits; it actually provokes general insistence on the need for direct, rank-and-file democracy – a veritable explosion of democratic demands.

⁹ See especially the text by A. Cottureau in the collective volume, *L'administration*, Paris 1974.

Part Five

Towards a Democratic Socialism

The question of socialism and democracy, of the democratic road to socialism, is today posed with reference to two historical experiences, which in a way serve as examples of the twin limits or dangers to be avoided: the traditional social-democratic experience, as illustrated in a number of West European countries, and the Eastern example of what is called 'real socialism'. Despite everything that distinguishes these cases, despite everything that opposes social democracy and Stalinism to each other as theoretico-political currents, they nevertheless exhibit a fundamental complicity: both are marked by *statism* and profound distrust of mass initiatives, in short by suspicion of democratic demands. In France, many now like to speak of two traditions of the working-class and popular movements: the statist and Jacobin one, running from Lenin and the October Revolution to the Third International and the Communist movement; and a second one characterized by notions of self-management and direct, rank-and-file democracy. It is then argued that the achievement of democratic socialism requires a break with the former and integration with the latter. In fact, however, this is a rather perfunctory way of posing the question. Although there are indeed two traditions, they do not coincide with the currents just mentioned. Moreover, it would be a fundamental error to imagine that mere integration with the current of self-management and direct democracy is sufficient to avoid statism.

First of all, then, we must take yet another look at Lenin and the October Revolution. Of course, Stalinism and the model of the transition to socialism bequeathed by the Third International differ

from Lenin's own thought and action. But they are not simply a deviation from the latter. Seeds of Stalinism were well and truly present in Lenin – and not only because of the peculiarities of Russia and the Tsarist state with which he had to grapple. The error of the Third International cannot be explained simply as an attempt to universalize in an aberrant manner a model of socialism that corresponded, in its original purity, to the concrete situation of Tsarist Russia. At the same time, these seeds are not to be found in Marx himself. Lenin was the first to tackle the problem of the transition to socialism and the withering away of the State, concerning which Marx left only a few general observations on the close relationship between socialism and democracy.

What then was the exact import of the October Revolution for the withering away of the State? Out of the several problems relating to the seeds of the Third International in Lenin, one seems here to occupy a dominant position. For all Lenin's analyses and actions are traversed by the following *leitmotif*: the State must be entirely destroyed through frontal attack in a situation of *dual power*, to be replaced by a second power – soviets – which will no longer be a State in the proper sense of the term, since it will already have begun to wither away. What does Lenin mean by this destruction of the bourgeois State? Unlike Marx, he often reduces the institutions of representative democracy and political freedoms to a simple emanation of the bourgeoisie: representative democracy = bourgeois democracy = dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. They have to be completely uprooted and replaced by direct, rank-and-file democracy and mandated, recallable delegates – in other words, by the genuine proletarian democracy of soviets.

I am intentionally drawing a highly schematized picture: Lenin's principal thrust was not at first towards a variant of authoritarian statism. I say this not in order to leap to Lenin's defence, but to point up the simplistic and befogging character of that conception according to which developments in Soviet Russia resulted from Lenin's 'centralist' opposition to direct democracy – from a Leninism which is supposed to have carried within it the crushing of the Kronstadt sailors' revolt, in the way that a cloud carries the storm.

Whether we like it or not, the original guiding thread of Lenin's thought was, in opposition to the parliamentarianism and dread of workers' councils characteristic of the social-democratic current, the sweeping replacement of 'formal' representative democracy by the 'real', direct democracy of workers' councils. (The term 'self-management' was not yet used in Lenin's time.) This leads me on to the real question. Was it not this very line (sweeping substitution of rank-and-file democracy for representative democracy) which principally accounted for what happened in Lenin's lifetime in the Soviet Union, and which gave rise to the centralizing and statist Lenin whose posterity is well enough known.

I said that I am posing the question. But as a matter of fact, it was already posed in Lenin's time and answered in a way that now seems dramatically premonitory. I am referring, of course, to Rosa Luxemburg, whom Lenin called an eagle of revolution. She also had the eye of an eagle. For it was she who made the first correct and fundamental critique of Lenin and the Bolshevik Revolution. It is decisive because it issues not from the ranks of social democracy, which did not want even to hear of direct democracy and workers' councils, but precisely from a convinced fighter who gave her life for council democracy, being executed at the moment when the German workers' councils were crushed by social democracy.

Now, Luxemburg reproaches Lenin not with neglect or contempt of direct, rank-and-file democracy, but rather with *the exact opposite* – that is to say, *exclusive* reliance on council democracy and complete elimination of representative democracy (through, among other things, dissolution of the Constituent Assembly – which had been elected under the Bolshevik government – in favour of the soviets alone). It is necessary to re-read *The Russian Revolution*, from which I shall quote just one passage. 'In place of the representative bodies created by general, popular elections, Lenin and Trotsky have laid down the soviets as the only true representation of the labouring masses. But with the repression of political life in the land as a whole, life in the soviets must also become more and more crippled. Without general elections, without unrestricted freedom of press and assembly, without a free struggle of opinion, life dies out

in every public institution, becomes a mere semblance of life, in which only the bureaucracy remains as the active element.’¹

This is certainly not the only question to be asked concerning Lenin. An important role in subsequent developments was played by the conception of the Party contained in *What is to be Done?*; by the notion of theory being brought to the working class from outside by professional revolutionaries, and so on. But the fundamental question is the one posed by Luxemburg. Even if we take into account Lenin’s positions on a series of other problems, as well as the historical peculiarities of Russia, what ensued in Lenin’s own lifetime and above all after his death (the single Party, bureaucratization of the Party, confusion of Party and State, statism, the end of the soviets themselves, etc.) was already inscribed in the situation criticized by Luxemburg.

Be that as it may, let us now look at the ‘model’ of revolution that was bequeathed by the Third International, having already been affected by Stalinism in certain ways. We find the same position with regard to representative democracy, only now it is combined with statism and contempt for direct, rank-and-file democracy – in short, the meaning of the entire council problematic is twisted out of shape. The resulting model is permeated by the instrumental conception of the State. The capitalist State is still considered as a mere object or instrument, capable of being manipulated by the bourgeoisie of which it is the emanation. According to this view of things, the State is not traversed by internal contradictions, but is a monolithic bloc without cracks of any kind. The struggles of the popular masses cannot pass through the State, any more than they can become, in opposition to the bourgeoisie, one of the constituent factors of the institutions of representative democracy. Class contradictions are located *between* the State and the popular masses standing outside the State. This remains true right up to the crisis of dual power, when the State is effectively dismantled through the centralization at national level of a parallel power, which becomes the real power (soviets). Thus:

1. The struggle of the popular masses for state power is, in essence, a frontal struggle of manoeuvre or encirclement, taking

place outside the fortress-state and principally aiming at the creation of a situation of dual power.

2. While it would be hasty to identify this conception with an assault strategy concentrated in a precise moment or 'big day' (insurrection, political general strike, etc.), it quite clearly lacks the strategic vision of a *process* of transition to socialism – that is, of a long stage during which the masses will act to conquer power and transform the state apparatuses. It presents these changes as possible only in a situation of dual power, characterized by a highly precarious balance of forces between the State/bourgeoisie and the soviets/working class. The 'revolutionary situation' is itself reduced to a crisis of the State that cannot but involve its breakdown.

3. The State is supposed to hold pure power – a quantifiable substance that has to be seized from it. 'To take' state power therefore means to occupy, during the interval of dual power, all the parts of the instrument-State: to take charge of the summit of its apparatuses, assuming the commanding positions within the state machinery and operating its controls in such a way as to replace it by the second, soviet power. A citadel can be taken only if, during the dual power situation, ditches, ramparts and casements of its instrumental structure have already been captured and dismantled in favour of something else (soviets); and this something else (the second power) is supposed to lie entirely outside the fortified position of the State. This conception, then, is still marked by permanent scepticism as to the possibility of mass intervention within the State itself.

4. How does the transformation of the state apparatus appear during the transition to socialism? It is first of all necessary to take state power, and then, after the fortress has been captured, to raze to the ground the entire state apparatus, replacing it by the second power (soviets) constituted as a State of a new type.

Here we can recognize a basic distrust of the institutions of representative democracy and of political freedoms. But if these are still regarded as creations and instruments of the bourgeoisie, the conception of soviets has in the meantime undergone significant changes. What is to replace the bourgeois State *en bloc* is no longer

direct, rank-and-file democracy. The soviets are now not so much an anti-State as a *parallel State* – one copied from the instrumental model of the existing State, and possessing a proletarian character in so far as its summit is controlled/occupied by a ‘single’ revolutionary party which itself functions according to the model of the State. Distrust of the possibility of mass intervention within the bourgeois State has become distrust of the popular movement as such. This is called strengthening the State/soviets, the better to make it wither away in the future ... *And so was Stalinist statism born.*

We can now see the deep complicity between this Stalinist kind of statism and that of traditional social democracy. For the latter is also characterized by basic distrust of direct, rank-and-file democracy and popular initiative. For it too, the popular masses stand in a relationship of externality to a State that possesses power and constitutes an essence. Here the State is a subject, bearing an intrinsic rationality that is incarnated by political élites and the very mechanism of representative democracy. Accordingly, occupation of the State involves replacing the top leaders by an enlightened left élite and, if necessary, making a few adjustments to the way in which the existing institutions function; it is left as understood that the State will thereby bring socialism to the popular masses from above. *This then is the techno-bureaucratic statism of the experts.*

Stalinist state-worship, social-democratic state-worship: this is indeed one of the traditions of the popular movement. But to escape from it through the other tradition of direct, rank-and-file democracy or self-management would really be too good to be true. We should not forget the case of Lenin himself and the seeds of statism contained in the original workers’ councils experience. The basic dilemma from which we must extricate ourselves is the following: *either* maintain the existing State and stick exclusively to a modified form of representative democracy – a road that ends up in social-democratic statism and so-called liberal parliamentarianism; *or* base everything on direct, rank-and-file democracy or the movement for self-management – a path which, sooner or later, inevitably leads to statist despotism or the

dictatorship of experts. The essential problem of the democratic road to socialism, of democratic socialism, must be posed in a different way: *how is it possible radically to transform the State in such a manner that the extension and deepening of political freedoms and the institutions of representative democracy (which were also a conquest of the popular masses) are combined with the unfurling of forms of direct democracy and the mushrooming of self-management bodies?*

Not only did the notion of dictatorship of the proletariat fail to pose this problem; it ended by obscuring it. For Marx, the dictatorship of the proletariat was a notion of applied strategy, serving at most as a signpost. It referred to the class nature of the State and to the necessity of its transformation in the transition to socialism and the process of withering away of the State. Now, although the object to which it referred is still real, the notion has come to play a precise historical role: it obscures the fundamental problem of combining a transformed representative democracy with direct, rank-and-file democracy. It is for these reasons, and not because the notion eventually became identified with Stalinist totalitarianism, that its abandonment is, in my opinion, justified. Even when it took on other meanings, it always retained the historical function in question – both for Lenin, at the beginning of the October Revolution, and, nearer our own time, for Gramsci himself.

Of course, there is no disputing Gramsci's considerable theoretical-political contributions, and we know the distance he took from the Stalinist experience. Still, even though he is currently being pulled and pushed in every conceivable direction, the fact remains that Gramsci was also unable to pose the problem in all its amplitude. His famous analyses of the differences between war of movement (as waged by the Bolsheviks in Russia) and war of position are essentially conceived as the application of Lenin's model/strategy to the 'different concrete conditions' of the West. Despite his remarkable insights, this leads him into a number of blind alleys, which we do not have space to discuss here.

This then is the basic problem of democratic socialism. It does not concern only the so-called developed countries, for there is no

strategic model exclusively adapted to these countries. In fact, there is no longer a question of building 'models' of any kind whatsoever. All that is involved is a set of signposts which, drawing on the lessons of the past, point out the traps to anyone wishing to avoid certain well-known destinations. The problem concerns every transition to socialism, even though it may present itself quite differently in various countries. This much we know already: socialism cannot be democratic here and of another kind over there. The concrete situation may of course differ, and the strategies undoubtedly have to be adapted to the country's specific features. But democratic socialism is the only kind possible.

With regard to this socialism, to the democratic road to socialism, the current situation in Europe presents a number of peculiarities: these concern at one and the same time the new social relations, the state form that is being established, and the precise character of the crisis of the State. For certain European countries, these particularities constitute so many chances – probably unique in world history – for the success of a democratic socialist experience, articulating transformed representative democracy and direct, rank-and-file democracy. This entails the elaboration of a new strategy with respect both to the capture of state power by the popular masses and their organizations, and to the transformations of the State designated by the term 'democratic road to socialism'.

Today less than ever is the State an ivory tower isolated from the popular masses. Their struggles constantly traverse the State, even when they are not physically present in its apparatuses. Dual power, in which frontal struggle is concentrated in a precise moment, is not the only situation that allows the popular masses to carry out an action in the sphere of the State. The democratic road to socialism is a long process, in which the struggle of the popular masses does not seek to create an effective dual power parallel and external to the State, but brings itself to bear on the internal contradictions of the State. To be sure, the seizure of power always presupposes a crisis of the State (such as exists today in certain European countries); but this crisis, which sharpens the very internal contradictions of the State, cannot be reduced to a breakdown of the latter. To take or

capture state power is not simply to lay hands on part of the state machinery in order to replace it with a second power. Power is not a quantifiable substance held by the State that must be taken out of its hands, but rather a series of relations among the various social classes. In its ideal form, power is concentrated in the State, which is thus itself the condensation of a particular class relationship of forces. The State is neither a thing-instrument that may be taken away, nor a fortress that may be penetrated by means of a wooden horse, nor yet a safe that may be cracked by burglary: it is the heart of the exercise of political power.

For state power to be taken, a mass struggle must have unfolded in such a way as to modify the relationship of forces within the state apparatuses, themselves the strategic site of political struggle. For a dual-power type of strategy, however, the decisive shift in the relationship of forces takes place not within the State but between the State and the masses outside. In the democratic road to socialism, the long process of taking power essentially consists in the spreading, development, reinforcement, coordination and direction of those diffuse centres of resistance which the masses always possess within the state networks, in such a way that they become the real centres of power on the strategic terrain of the State. It is therefore not a question of a straight choice between frontal war of movement and war of position, because in Gramsci's use of the term, the latter always comprises encirclement of a fortress State.

I can already hear the question: have we then given in to traditional reformism? In order to answer this, we must examine how the question of reformism was posed by the Third International. As a matter of fact, it regarded every strategy other than that of dual power as reformist. The only radical break allowing the seizure of state power, the only meaningful break making it possible to escape from reformism was the break between the State (as a simple instrument of the bourgeoisie external to the masses) and a second power (the masses/soviets) lying wholly outside the State. By the way, this did not prevent the emergence of a reformism peculiar to the Third International – one bound up

precisely with the instrumental conception of the State. Quite the contrary! You corner some loose parts of the state machinery and collect a few isolated bastions while *awaiting* a dual power situation. Then, as time passes, dual power goes by the board: all that remains is the instrument-State which you capture cog by cog or whose command posts you take over.

Now, reformism is an ever-latent danger, not a vice inherent in any strategy other than that of dual power – even if, in the case of a democratic road to socialism, the criterion of reformism is not as sharp as in the dual-power strategy, and even if (there is no point in denying it) the risks of social-democratization are thereby increased. At any event, to shift the relationship of forces within the State does not mean to win successive reforms in an unbroken chain, to conquer the state machinery piece by piece, or simply to occupy the positions of government. It denotes nothing other than a *stage of real breaks*, the climax of which – and there has to be one – is reached when the relationship of forces on the strategic terrain of the State swings over to the side of the popular masses.

This democratic road to socialism is therefore not simply a parliamentary or electoral road. Waiting for an electoral majority (in parliament or for a presidential candidate) can be only a moment, however important that may be; and its achievement is not necessarily the climax of breaks within the State. The shift in the relationship of forces within the State touches its apparatuses and mechanisms as a whole; it does not affect only parliament or, as is so often repeated nowadays, the ideological state apparatuses that are supposed to play the determining role in the ‘contemporary’ State. The process extends also, and above all, to the repressive state apparatuses that hold the monopoly of legitimate physical violence: especially the army and the police. But just as we should not forget the particular role of these apparatuses (as is frequently done by versions of the democratic road that are founded on a misinterpretation of some of Gramsci’s theses), so we should not imagine that the strategy of modifying the relationship of forces within the State is valid only for the ideological apparatuses, and that the repressive apparatuses, completely isolated from popular

struggle, can be taken only by frontal, external attack. In short, we cannot add together two strategies, retaining the dual-power perspective in relation to the repressive apparatuses. Obviously, a shift in the balance of forces within the repressive apparatuses poses special, and therefore formidable, problems. But as the case of Portugal showed with perfect clarity, these apparatuses are themselves traversed by the struggles of the popular masses.

Furthermore, the real alternative raised by the democratic road to socialism is indeed that of a struggle of the popular masses to modify the relationship of forces within the State, as opposed to a frontal, dual-power type of strategy. The choice is not, as is often thought, between a struggle 'within' the state apparatuses (that is, physically invested and inserted in their material space) and a struggle located at a certain physical distance from these apparatuses. *First*, because any struggle at a distance always has effects within the State: it is always there, even if only in a refracted manner and through intermediaries. *Secondly*, and most importantly, because struggle at a distance from the state apparatuses, whether within or beyond the limits of the physical space traced by the institutional *loci*, remains necessary at all times and in every case, since it reflects the autonomy of the struggles and organizations of the popular masses. It is not simply a matter of entering state institutions (parliament, economic and social councils, 'planning' bodies, etc.) in order to use their characteristic levers for a good purpose. In addition, struggle must always express itself in the development of popular movements, the mushrooming of democratic organs at the base, and the rise of centres of self-management.

It should not be forgotten that the above points refer not only to transformations of the State, but also to the basic question of state power and power in general. The question of *who* is in power *to do what* cannot be isolated from these struggles for self-management or direct democracy. But if they are to modify the relations of power, such struggles or movements cannot tend towards centralization in a second power; they must rather seek to shift the relationship of forces on the terrain of the State itself. This then is the real

alternative, and not the simple opposition between ‘internal’ and ‘external’ struggle. In the democratic road to socialism, these two forms of struggle must be combined. In other words, whether or not one becomes ‘integrated’ in the state apparatuses and plays the game of the existing power is not reducible to the choice between internal and external struggle. Such integration does not necessarily follow from a strategy of effecting changes on the terrain of the State. To think that it does is to imagine that political struggle can ever be located wholly outside the State.

This strategy of taking power leads on directly to the question of transformations of the State in a democratic road to socialism. Authoritarian statism can be avoided only by combining the transformation of representative democracy with the development of forms of direct, rank-and-file democracy or the movement for self-management. But this in turn raises fresh problems. In the dual-power strategy, which envisages straightforward replacement of the state apparatus with an apparatus of councils, taking state power is treated as a preliminary to its destruction/replacement. Transformation of the state apparatus does not really enter into the matter: first of all the existing state power is taken, and then another is put in its place. This view of things can no longer be accepted. If taking power denotes a shift in the relationship of forces within the State, and if it is recognized that this will involve a long process of change, then the seizure of state power will entail concomitant transformations of its apparatuses. It is true that the State retains a specific materiality: not only is a shift in the relationship of forces within the State insufficient to alter that materiality, but the relationship itself can crystallize in the State only to the extent that the apparatuses of the latter undergo transformation. In abandoning the dual-power strategy, we do not throw overboard, but pose in a different fashion, the question of the State’s materiality as a specific apparatus.

In this context, I talked above of a *sweeping transformation* of the state apparatus during the transition to democratic socialism. Although this term certainly has a demonstrative value, it seems to indicate a general direction, before which – if I dare say so – stand

two red lights. First, the expression ‘sweeping transformation of the state apparatus in the democratic road to socialism’ suggests that there is no longer a place for what has traditionally been called *smashing* or *destroying* that apparatus. The fact remains, however, that the term smashing, which Marx too used for indicative purposes, came in the end to designate a very precise historical phenomenon: namely, the eradication of any kind of representative democracy or ‘formal’ liberties in favour purely of direct, rank-and-file democracy and so-called real liberties. It is necessary to take sides. If we understand the democratic road to socialism and democratic socialism itself to involve, among other things, political (party) and ideological pluralism, recognition of the role of universal suffrage, and extension and deepening of all political freedoms including for opponents, then talk of smashing or destroying the state apparatus can be no more than a mere verbal trick. What is involved, through all the various transformations, is a real permanence and continuity of the institutions of representative democracy – not as unfortunate relics to be tolerated for as long as necessary, but as an essential condition of democratic socialism.

Now we come to the second red light: the term ‘sweeping transformation’ accurately designates both the direction and the means of changes in the state apparatus. There can be no question of merely secondary adjustments (such as those envisaged by neo-liberal conceptions of a revived *de jure* State), nor of changes coming mainly from above (according to the vision of traditional social democracy or liberalized Stalinism). There can be no question of a statist transformation of the state apparatus. *Transformation of the state apparatus tending towards the withering away of the State* can rest only on increased intervention of the popular masses in the State: certainly through their trade-union and political forms of representation, but also through their own initiatives within the State itself. This will proceed by stages, but it cannot be confined to mere democratization of the State – whether in relation to parliament, political liberties, the role of parties, democratization of the union and political apparatuses themselves, or to decentralization.

This process should be accompanied with the development of new forms of direct, rank-and-file democracy, and the flowering of self-management networks and centres. Left to itself, the transformation of the state apparatus and the development of representative democracy would be incapable of avoiding statism. But there is another side to the coin: a unilateral and univocal shift of the centre of gravity towards the self-management movement would likewise make it impossible, in the medium term, to avoid technobureaucratic statism and authoritarian confiscation of power by the experts. This could take the form of centralization in a second power, which quite simply replaces the mechanisms of representative democracy. But it would also occur in another variant that is quite frequently envisaged today. According to this conception, the only way to avoid statism is to place oneself outside the State, leaving that radical and eternal evil more or less as it is and disregarding the problem of its transformation. The way forward would then be, without going as far as dual power, simply to block the path of the State from outside through the construction of self-management 'counter-powers' at the base – in short, to quarantine the State within its own domain and thus halt the spread of the disease.

Such a perspective is currently formulated in numerous ways. It appears first in the neo-technocratic talk of a State which is retained because of the complex nature of tasks in a post-industrial society, but which is administered by left experts and controlled simply through mechanisms of direct democracy. At the most, every left technocrat would be flanked by a self-management commissar – a prospect which hardly frightens the various specialists, who are even manifesting a sudden passion for self-management because they know that, at the end of the day, the masses will propose and the State will decide. It also appears in the language of the new libertarians, for whom statism can be avoided only by breaking power up and scattering it among an infinity of micro-powers (a kind of guerrilla warfare conducted against the State). In each case, however, the Leviathan-State is left in place, and no attention is given to those transformations of the State without which the

movement of direct democracy is bound to fail. The movement is prevented from intervening in actual transformations of the State, and the two processes are simply kept running along parallel lines. The real question is of a different kind: how, for example, can an organic relationship be created between citizens' committees and universal suffrage assemblies that will themselves have been transformed as a function of the relationship?

As we see then, the task is really not to 'synthesize' or stick together the statist and self-management traditions of the popular movement, but rather to open up a *global perspective of the withering away of the State*. This comprises *two* articulated processes: transformation of the State and unfurling of direct, rank-and-file democracy. We know the consequences of the formal split between the two traditions that has arisen out of the disarticulation of these processes. However, while it alone is capable of leading to democratic socialism, this path has a reverse side: two dangers are lying in wait for it.

The first of these is the *reaction of the enemy*, in this case the bourgeoisie. Although old and well-known, this danger appears here in a particularly acute form. The classical response of the dual-power strategy was precisely destruction of the state apparatus – an attitude which in a certain sense remains valid, since truly profound breaks are required, rather than secondary modifications of the state apparatus. But it remains valid in one sense only. In so far as what is involved is no longer destruction of that apparatus and its replacement with a second power, but rather a long process of transformation, the enemy has greater possibilities of boycotting an experience of democratic socialism and of brutally intervening to cut it short. Clearly, the democratic road to socialism will not simply be a peaceful changeover.

It is possible to confront this danger through active reliance on a broad, popular movement. Let us be quite frank. As the decisive means to the realization of its goals and to the articulation of the two preventives against statism and the social-democratic impasse, the democratic road to socialism, unlike the 'vanguardist' dual-power strategy, presupposes the continuous support of a mass

movement founded on broad popular alliances. If such a movement (what Gramsci called the active, as opposed to the passive, revolution) is not deployed and active, if the Left does not succeed in arousing one, then nothing will prevent social-democratization of the experience: however radical they may be, the various programmes will change little of relevance. A broad popular movement constitutes a guarantee against the reaction of the enemy, even though it is not sufficient and must always be linked to sweeping transformations of the State. That is the dual lesson we can draw from Chile: the ending of the Allende experience was due not only to the lack of such changes, but also to the fact that the intervention of the bourgeoisie (itself expressed in that lack) was made possible by the breakdown of alliances among the popular classes, particularly between the working class and the petty bourgeoisie. Even before the coup took place, this had broken the momentum of support for the Popular Unity government. In order to arouse this broad movement, the Left must equip itself with the necessary means, taking up especially new popular demands on fronts that used to be wrongly called 'secondary' (women's struggles, the ecological movement, and so on).

The second question concerns the *forms of articulation* of the two processes: transformations of the State and of representative democracy, and development of direct democracy and the movement for self-management. The new problems arise as soon as it is no longer a question of suppressing the one in favour of the other, whether through straightforward elimination or – which comes to the same thing – through integration of the one in the other (of, for example, self-management centres in the institutions of representative democracy); that is to say, as soon as it is no longer a question of assimilating the two processes. How is it possible to avoid being drawn into mere parallelism or juxtaposition, whereby each follows its own specific course? In what fields, concerning which decisions, and at what points in time should representative assemblies have precedence over the centres of direct democracy: parliament over factory committees, town councils over citizens' committees – or vice versa? Given that up to a point conflict will be

inevitable, how should it be resolved without leading, slowly but surely, to an embryonic or fully fledged situation of *dual power*?

This time, dual power would involve two powers of the Left – a left government and a second power composed of popular organs. And, as we know from the case of Portugal, even when two forces of the Left are involved, the situation in no way resembles a free play of powers and counter-powers balancing one another for the greatest good of socialism and democracy. It rather quickly leads to open opposition, in which there is a risk that one will be eliminated in favour of the other. In one case (e.g. Portugal), the result is social-democratization, while in the other variant – elimination of representative democracy – it is not the withering of the State or the triumph of direct democracy that eventually emerges, but a new type of authoritarian dictatorship. But in either case, the State will always end up the winner. Of course, there is a strong chance that, even before dual power reaches that outcome, something else will happen – something that Portugal just managed to avoid – namely, the brutal, fascist-type reaction of a bourgeoisie that can always be relied upon to stay in the game. Thus, open opposition between these two powers seriously threatens, after a first stage of real paralysis of the State, to be resolved by a third contender, the bourgeoisie, according to scenarios that are not difficult to imagine. I said third contender, but it will not have escaped the reader's notice that in all these cases (fascist-type intervention, social-democratization, authoritarian dictatorship of experts on the ruins of direct democracy) this contender is in one form or another ultimately the same: the bourgeoisie.

What then is the solution, the answer to all that? I could, of course, point to the observations made above, to the numerous works, research projects and discussions under way more or less throughout Europe, as well as to the partial experiences now taking place at regional, municipal or self-management level. But these offer no easy recipe for a solution, since the answer to such questions does not yet exist – not even as a model theoretically guaranteed in some holy text or other. History has not yet given us a successful experience of the democratic road to socialism: what it

has provided – and that is not insignificant – is some negative examples to avoid and some mistakes upon which to reflect. It can naturally always be argued, in the name of realism (either by proponents of the dictatorship of the proletariat or by the others, the orthodox neo-liberals), that if democratic socialism has never yet existed, this is because it is impossible. Maybe. We no longer share that belief in the millenium founded on a few iron laws concerning the inevitability of a democratic-socialist revolution; nor do we enjoy the support of a fatherland of democratic socialism. But one thing is certain: socialism will be democratic or it will not be at all. What is more, optimism about the democratic road to socialism should not lead us to consider it as a royal road, smooth and free of risk. Risks there are, although they are no longer quite where they used to be: at worst, we could be heading for camps and massacres as appointed victims. But to that I reply: if we weigh up the risks, that is in any case preferable to massacring other people only to end up ourselves beneath the blade of a Committee of Public Safety or some Dictator of the proletariat.

There is only one sure way of avoiding the risks of democratic socialism, and that is to keep quiet and march ahead under the tutelage and the rod of advanced liberal democracy. But that is another story.

¹ Rosa Luxemburg, *The Russian Revolution*, Ann Arbor 1961, p. 71.